

of the shadowing or of the dangers that are warded off.

Once, while President Roosevelt was staying at a New York hotel, a detective discovered a well dressed man furiously scribbling sheets of paper in the writing-room.

"What are you doing?" asked the detective amiably.

"Writing a letter to President Roosevelt; I want to show him how to run this hotel. I am going to read the letter in the lobby before I take it up."

"Well, that's too bad," answered the detective. "The President didn't like it here and went up to the Blank Hotel just a minute or two ago. It's funny you didn't see him. If you hurry you can catch him."

As the fellow rose, the detective picked his pocket of a revolver. It is a favorite game of hotel detectives to "pass the buck" to the next hotel, and then telephone.

"Bill" Kennel, who has been official guardian for the mayors of New York for a quarter of a century, knows more cranks than any other human being alive. He claims that Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays are their favorite days.

Making Life Miserable for the Rich

CRANKS make prisoners of the rich. Mrs. Russell Sage has not been able to walk on the streets since the day she announced the Sage Foundation. Henry Ford was overwhelmed by men with schemes the day after he gave out his profit-sharing scheme, and he is now forced to hire a cordon of guards. Charles M. Schwab closed his Johnstown house because of the threats of the arms embargo fanatics. He and J. P. Morgan are the center of the anti-munition craze.

The half-lunatics haunt the residences of the rich. They so often try to enter

that wealthy men and women make it a rule never to see a caller they do not know, or who has not been first interviewed by a secretary. The doormen in all great houses are well paid men whose business it is to investigate visitors. In the country places of Rockefeller, Morgan, and Carnegie, detectives not only guard the grounds, but they constantly patrol the grounds. Dogs are often loosed at night.

Carnegie keeps a man stationed, day and night, on the street corner of his New York residence. This man picked up a large explosive bomb there not long ago. William J. Burns has the supervision of the Pocantico Hills estate of Rockefeller. Mrs. Sage has a man at the station at Lawrence, Long Island, where she has a summer home; this man investigates every person who inquires the way to the Sage residence. Edison will not see any one without an appointment, nor without knowing all about the caller and his business.

While Carnegie was seated at a dinner of the Society of American Authors, a man in clerical costume stood up and cried: "I want to ask Mr. Carnegie a question. I want to ask him if he will give five millions for an invention; he is a philanthropist—"

Carnegie testily called out: "I am not a philanthropist. I reject the name and I do not want to be known as such. When I give away my money, I do not do it from philanthropic motives. I am not such a foolish fellow."

The clergyman had an invention for the automatic recording of thought. He was removed from the dining-hall, and committed suicide during the night.

Before Helen Gould became Mrs. Finley J. Shepard, she was swamped with begging letters offering the hand of the writer in marriage. She had more than five hundred letters a day, and about one third of these were matrimonial proposals.

The Mystery at Woodford's

By WADSWORTH CAMP

Illustration by Arthur I. Keller

McHUGH, frowning and eager, bent over the actor.

"Try to think, Wilkins. You got to remember. There must be something, if you can only remember."

But Wilkins' face remained blank. Even after he had fought for and won a semblance of control, he had nothing more to offer than that statement—beyond the bounds of reason, yet verified by his watch and the clocks—that he had left Quaile's apartment at eight o'clock; had, as far as he knew, come straight; nevertheless had taken an hour and a half to complete the twenty-minute journey. Certainly the man had no purpose in lying.

"That hour's gone out of my life," he said. "It—it makes me feel—sick."

He arose and faced Barbara, while McHugh watched him closely.

"Could I have a glass of water?" Barbara rang. McHugh continued to study the actor.

The maid slipped in with the water. Wilkins drank it thirstily. He tried to smile; the effort twisted his features unpleasantly.

"Maybe you're suspicious of my habits, Mr. McHugh."

The manager's glance did not waver. "You say you ate dinner at Quaile's apartment?"

"Yes."

McHugh turned away. "Must have rotten food at your joint, Quaile, if it puts a man out like that."

He turned to Barbara, whose attitude had been tensely observant—almost, Quaile fancied, apprehensive.

"What's become of Dolly?"

Barbara sighed. At last her hands left the chair-back.

"Dolly was no use," she answered. "We were sure there wouldn't be a rehearsal, and she wanted to go home. She was afraid of the—of the—"

She broke off, glancing at the telephone.

"What's the bluff for?" McHugh asked harshly.

"I don't understand."

"I guess you understand," McHugh said. "Aren't you trying to give me the impression you don't want Wilkins to know about Dolly's scare with the telephone?"

The protective instinct, to which Quaile had answered before, urged him to interfere; but Barbara gave him no opportunity. Her cheeks, which had been as pale as Wilkins', flushed.

"Wasn't that your wish?"

"A lot of good my wishes do!" McHugh scoffed. "See here, Barbara. We've come to a show-down, you and me. What you mean by begging Wilkins to throw over the part—talking about madness and suicide? Eh? What's the idea? Time I knew something about it too."

Her tone colored with an anger

IN reviving "Coward's Fare" in Woodford's Theater, closed for many years, Arthur McHugh appears to be taking chances with the supernatural. Forty years ago Bertrand Woodford died on its stage while playing his favorite rôle in the play, and there is a legend that his jealousy causes his ghost and that of his pet cat to haunt the theater, to prevent any other actor from playing his part. As soon as rehearsals begin there are evidences of some unearthly influence in the old theater. Limping footsteps (Woodford was lame when he died) and those of a cat are heard, and a strange perfume which Dolly Timken, an old actress who played with Woodford, declares he used, is noticeable. Harvey Carlton, the leading man, tells Richard Quaile, who revised "Coward's Fare," that he has received mysterious warnings "out of the air" not to play the part, but this is not made known, except to McHugh. The first time that the actor, in rehearsal, attempts to read the lines at which Woodford died, Carlton falls dead on the stage. All of the cast, including Barbara Morgan, leading woman, and the new leading man, Tyler Wilkins, show nervousness in rehearsals; and McHugh avoids the big scene in which Woodford and afterward Carlton died. For some reason incomprehensible to Quaile, who is half in love with the girl, the manager is suspicious of his leading woman. He arranges a rehearsal of the principals in the big scene to take place in Miss Morgan's apartment one evening. While they are waiting for Wilkins, who is unaccountably late, the telephone rings with a far-away, ghostly tinkle, and Miss Timken, at McHugh's direction, takes the message. Almost overcome by emotion, the old actress declares she heard Woodford's voice say that Wilkins will not play in the big scene. While McHugh and Quaile are looking for Wilkins at his club, he arrives at Miss Morgan's apartment, and inquires if he is the first to get there. When the two men return, they find Wilkins in a state of bewilderment, unable to account for a space of time that has completely gone out of his life.

that failed quite to hide its perturbation.

"You saw Mr. Carlton die. You've more knowledge of what's happened in the theater than I have. You know as well as I do that it does seem mad and suicidal to play that part. If you're too selfish to tell Mr. Wilkins so yourself, I'm not. Well, I've told him."

QUAILE, expectant of a riotous outburst on McHugh's side, saw only a growth of the man's determination before this unforeseen defiance.

"I'm the best judge of how to run my own business," he said mildly.

"Then tell me," she answered, "how you happened to overhear what I said to Mr. Wilkins."

McHugh grinned sheepishly.

"Your door was unlocked. I walked in."

"And how did it get unlocked?" she demanded. "You arranged that in order to eavesdrop."

She spoke more rapidly—in her eagerness, the words stumbled a trifle:

"It really is time we had a show-down, as you say, Mr. McHugh. You've gone out of your path to be rude and unfair to me. You almost make me believe you suspect me of something. Can't you be honest? What is it?"

"Now come. Now come. I never said I suspected you of anything, Barbara."

"But I know you do," she answered.

"After what you've said and done to-night we can't go on together. If my leaving the company puts you to inconvenience, you've only yourself to blame."

The manager laughed shortly.

"Hoity-toity. Come off your high horse, Barbara. I never knew you were

so darned high-strung. I take water. If I heard anything that wasn't intended for my ears, I'm sorry. Let's forget it."

She hesitated.

"I prefer to drop out. If you're doing this simply because you can't get along without me—"

McHugh winked at Quaile broadly. Quaile felt that the man deliberately wheedled her toward a goal he already had in mind.

"Don't you charge me with anything like that, Barbara."

"I mean," Barbara said determinedly, "this sort of thing can't occur again. I sha'n't stay on if I'm to be treated like a criminal."

McHugh's face became serious again.

"Tell me one thing, Barbara. Do you, or don't you, know anything about Woodford's ghost?"

She laughed, a little hysterically.

"It's hard to believe you're serious. Of course not."

"No more said," McHugh muttered. He grasped Wilkins' arm.

"The girl's got some reason. I've no business taking risks with other people's lives against their will. You're a strong man, Wilkins, and I don't believe afraid of much; but just now you're upset by a bad scare. Understand, you'll do as you like about the part, but if you want to please me you'll sleep on it; you won't make up your mind until morning. Then, if you want, I'll steer you up against a spook doctor. Quaile's talked to him. He'll tell you he's got a lot of horse sense."

Wilkins nodded.

"I don't want to seem a quitter, but this is a queer business, Mr. McHugh. I will sleep on it. I'll let you know in the morning."

"We'd better be off," McHugh said. "Time Barbara got quiet. Don't you hold anything against me, young woman. What I've just said to Wilkins is fair enough, isn't it? Coming, Quaile? I'll run you and Wilkins downtown."

"A few minutes after you," Quaile answered, attempting to hide his discomfort. "I want to speak to Miss Morgan about another matter."

"It is very late," she said.

The presence of the others made a more active objection impracticable, but Quaile saw clearly enough that she recoiled from the prospect of an interview.

McHugh glanced at him curiously, but he and Wilkins left, and Quaile and Barbara faced each other, alone. She would not raise her eyes.

"After what happened this afternoon—" she began.

He gestured impatiently. He stepped impulsively closer to her. She drew back until she leaned against the wall.

"All the more because of this afternoon," he said. "But that isn't the only reason I stayed. Listen, Barbara."

And, as he saw her shrink back:

"I shall call you that. The time has come for the destruction of a lot of pretense between us. We're dealing with too grave issues to dare veil what little truth there is."

THE emotion her reluctance to meet his eyes confessed affected him profoundly. He was aware again of the staccato pounding of his heart. He wanted to touch her, to draw her so close that he could no longer see, and feel his purpose scattered by, the uncertainty and the discontent of her pose. He made himself go on:

"I think you know already that I—"

He reached out and grasped her hands.

"Barbara," he said huskily, "let's be frank. If I displeased you the other night, and again this afternoon, it was because I love you. Surely you've seen."

She tried to tear her hands away, but he crushed them tighter.

"No; you'll listen to me."

She held her face averted, so that he couldn't see her eyes; but her cheeks were pallid again, and her lips twitched.

"Each day I've been surer of it. I've fought it; but to-night, when McHugh sprang his brutal third degree, I knew there was no use."

Her head moved slowly, so that at last she faced him. Her eyes were wide. They were like eyes that are about to fill with tears. In spite of their proximity, in spite of their actual contact, her voice scarcely reached him:

"No—no—no."

"You can say what you please—"

She straightened. She struggled wildly to free her hands. Tears appeared in her

eyes and fell to her cheeks. Quaille had to let her go.

She raised her hands to her face. The crimson marks of his fingers on her wrists appalled him.

"I'll lash myself for a blundering fool," he said, "if you'll tell me you've nothing to offer me—no hope—"

She moved slowly away toward the window. After a time she turned, lowering her hands.

"Will you go now?" she asked quietly. "Without a word?"

"What word do you want?" she cried. "Very well. You shall have it. You came back with Mr. McHugh. You played his spying game too. And—oh, I know! You came here as a spy this afternoon. You saw that I didn't want you. And when you found that I lived alone, you spied and—touched my hand. It—it was Judas-like. Will you go now?"

He went to her; but this time she did not shrink from him. Her defiant attitude had a pitiful bravado.

"You sha'n't say such things," he said, "because you don't believe them. Or are you only trying to make me angry, so I'll go? I did come this afternoon to learn more about you—with whom you lived. Is it unnatural I should do that, when I love you?"

The simplicity of his question for a moment relaxed her defense. Her face did not hide a swift response.

"Barbara," he burst out, "what is it? I believe if it were only yourself you wouldn't shrink from me—you wouldn't say things I can't accept. I told you it was a time for truths. Perhaps I am disloyal to McHugh, but I owe no one the loyalty I do you. I trust you—I believe in you: I couldn't love you any other way. Then—McHugh does suspect you—has suspected you for a long time of knowing something about the mystery at Woodford's."

"What has he told you?" she breathed. "Nothing. That's just it. Not a definite word. Can't you guess how that puzzles and hurts me?"

She spoke coldly, deliberately: "You acknowledge that you suspect me too."

He moved his hands helplessly. "I don't want the woman I love surrounded with mystery. Nor am I blind. Since Carlton's death you have altered. I did hear you to-night warning Wilkins to give up the part. I'm only human; I want to know why that was."

She shook her head. "So you ask me to marry you, and you expect me to believe in such a love."

AS he was about to defend himself, he started, listening with a vast incredulity.

For a voice had risen beyond the door he had imagined as leading to a bedroom. It vibrated from a low and mournful moaning, higher and higher, into a scream that abruptly ended. After a moment, out of the new silence, sobs followed one upon another, sharp and unnatural. He could not tell whether the cry and the sobs had issued from the throat of a woman or of a man. The choking, sexless clamor wandered into silence.

Hastening feet pattered in the hall, and, turning quickly, Quaille saw the black-robed maid pass. It was not she who had cried out.

He looked at Barbara. She gazed at the door, an expression of horror in her eyes. She took a few steps in that direction, then paused and glanced at him.

"What was that?" he asked sharply. She did not answer.

"Those sounds— You told me," he whispered, "that you lived here alone." "I didn't tell you," she whispered back. "It was your own conclusion."

"Then who is in there? What do those sobs mean?"

She appeared to be seeking some manner of escape from him.

"No one," she answered incoherently. "No one—as far as you are concerned. You're to forget you heard anything. It will not occur again. You heard nothing. You understand? There was nothing to hear."

He shook his head savagely.

"That's nonsense. You will tell me what that was; why you have kept the presence of that—that person here a secret; why that cry terrifies you."

"What right have you to ask that?" she said.

He stared at her, dazed by her unexpected change of front. He stammered a little.

"My—my love. Doesn't that give me a right?"

Her color deepened.

"Not unless I—I— Don't you see? Only I can give you such a right."

SHE moved away from the door toward the window, beckoning him. He followed her uncertainly. Her face was in shadow, but he could see that there were tears in her eyes again. Suddenly she stretched out her hands, and he grasped them and tried to draw her closer.

"If I should give it to you," she said—"the right to ask those questions?"

He wanted his arms about her, but she shook her head.

"Wait."

She bent back against the heavy folds of the curtain, but she permitted him to retain her hands.

"You leave me no choice," she whispered. "If I should tell you one truth, would you trust me and let the others go?"

"Barbara! You mean—"

She nodded.

"I will do that, because what you have heard here to-night must be your secret and mine."

Still she resisted him.

"Then," he asked, "you'll tell me who is in there?"

"No, no," she answered quickly. "I only tell you that I love you. Isn't that enough?"

The quiet words swept him beyond denial, but she guarded her lips.

"No," she said. "Because in the long run this only means sorrow for us, and it isn't fair. You must see that. It isn't fair to me."

Nor would she tell him anything more. "I only want you to go," she begged, "asking nothing. If you can't trust me, you must never talk of love again."

"I'll say nothing," he promised. "I'll ask nothing until you are willing to answer."

She tried to smile.

"You won't misunderstand, then? You won't credit me with manufacturing ghosts? You'll believe I am afraid of the theater—oh, how horribly afraid! Not for myself. It is because I am afraid that I came to your help the other night—that I warned Mr. Wilkins just now. You believe that?"

"Yes," he said. "But that cry? Is there any connection between that and—"

She placed her hand on his lips.

"Your faith," she said wistfully, "is not very strong. If your love is no stronger!"

In spite of her quiet tone, he appreciated a crisis. It was necessary for him to throw logic to the winds; to obey her wishes, strange and disturbing as they were; to deny his natural impulse to remain longer with her.

"Then I shall go," he said; "but you must not talk again of sorrow in the future for us."

"Yes," she said eagerly. "Don't let me talk of that. Try not to let me remember that."

She walked swiftly away from him to the bell. He followed her.

"Don't ring," he said. "Your maid—I can't explain it. She is too quiet. She makes me feel uncomfortable. And to-night I want to see no one but you."

With a sudden movement she bent and raised his hand to her lips. Before he could recover from his amazement, she had run across the room and turned, with her fingers on the knob of the door from behind which the cry and the sobs had reached him. She gestured him away.

She opened the door and disappeared, but she could not close the door quickly enough to smother the sounds of a difficult and stertorous breathing.

He walked to the hall, his heart beating rapidly. What hideous or unnatural thing did that door protect? Without a clue as to its nature, the sense of its presence sickened him.

NEXT morning McHugh burst without ceremony into Quaille's bedroom, perched himself on the foot of the bed, and bit at his inevitable cold cigar.

"You don't look tickled to death to see me, Quaille."

"I suppose I ought to be," Quaille answered wearily. "This is condescending, for a manager."

"Hang the fluff," McHugh answered. "I'm running no cut-and-dried production, and don't forget things may come to a head to-night. We go through that scene at dress rehearsal if Wilkins sticks, and, by my own advice, he's thinking it over. Did he say anything last night?"

Quaille yawned. "No; he'd gone to bed when I got home. Any word from the telephone company?"

"Yes; and no better luck than I had with your warning. They say that the call that scared Dolly couldn't possibly have been made. As far as they're concerned, it was Woodford's laugh she heard."

Quaille sat up, throwing back the covers. "McHugh," he said, "if you could only tell me that the thing isn't spiritual!"

"Well, I can't," McHugh answered. "Wish I could. Wish the first night was over and we were all out of the woods. Look here. I've got to find out about Wilkins sooner or later. Where's his room?"

Quaille told him, and arose. He heard McHugh knock and enter. From time to time the subdued murmur of voices reached him.

After he had dressed he met the manager in the hall. It was not difficult to read Wilkins' decision in McHugh's sparkling eyes, in his face broadened by a smile, in the jaunty angle of his cigar.

"So he's going on?" Quaille said.

"Nervy boy, that!" McHugh commented. "Same class as you. Say, how long did you hang on at Barbara's last night?"

"Really, I don't know. Maybe fifteen or twenty minutes."

McHugh appeared to search for words. "I suppose—there's no earthly use my asking what you talked about?"

"There isn't," Quaille answered firmly. "That's one point on which we disagree. I've told you often enough I won't spy on Miss Morgan, and I—well, no matter what you have in your mind, I trust her."

"All right," McHugh said. "I was young myself once. Too bad youth and damfoolishness trot along hand in hand. Still, it's great to be young."

"Just what do you mean?"

"What a blind man could see," McHugh said—"that you've fallen hard for the girl."

"That scarcely concerns you," Quaille flashed. "But suppose I had. Wouldn't it be the decent thing for you to explain your absurd suspicion of her?"

McHugh grunted.

"Just why I won't."

"Then please don't draw inferences from my friendship for her. In any other direction I'll do what you wish. Heaven knows I want to help, for I am afraid for Wilkins."

McHugh opened the door.

"Then we'll hope, Quaille, we won't have to say any more about it. And don't think I'm an old busybody. I got to do my job as I see it, no matter who gets stepped on."

Quaille closed the door, more worried than he cared to admit by McHugh's parting words. His reason cried that a menace lurked in them for Barbara and himself. Wilkins' manner, when he came from his room, troubled him further. Although the actor appeared tired and haggard, Quaille could get nothing illuminating from him as to McHugh's arguments.

"I'm going through with it," was all he would say, "because I can't bear the thought of cowardice. Yet I'm afraid."

"It's the wrong attitude," Quaille argued. "For instance, if Woodford's spirit were responsible, it could injure you chiefly through your own fear. It's worth

recalling that Carlton, when he tackled that scene, was terribly afraid."

They walked to the theater in a silence neither cared to break. The moment he stepped on the stage, Quaille saw Joyce in the auditorium. The psychologist sat with McHugh, who straightway beckoned Wilkins. The three talked then for some time in low tones, while the anxiety of Wilkins' face increased.

Quaille searched anxiously for Barbara. He asked Mike if she had come. The old property-man had not seen her enter. Disconsolately Quaille returned to the stage. For the first time he noticed Dolly. She sat alone in a corner, and her old uneasy manner had returned.

"Why do you glance around like that?" he asked.

"It's here again—the cat," she said; "and to-night we go through that scene."

Her fingers pulled at her handkerchief. "I saw Woodford die. I saw Mr. Carlton die during that scene. And it was there both times. I can't bear to look at Mr. Wilkins."

Quaille wanted to reassure her, but he couldn't hide his own belief.

"Have you told McHugh?"

"Yes, and he doesn't doubt. The Englishman believes it. It's wicked of them to let Mr. Wilkins go on."

McHugh called to him, and he turned and hurried to the footlights. Joyce, he saw, had left the theater. Wilkins strolled up and down the aisle, his hands in his pockets.

McHugh glanced at his watch. "Half past ten," he muttered, "and no sign of our leading lady. At least, Quaille, you might tell me if you've any reason to think she's going to throw me down."

"You heard what she said last night," Quaille answered. "That's all I know; but from what I've seen of her I think she'll keep her word."

MIKE came from the wings. He was clearly angry. He brought a message from Barbara. She had just telephoned she was suffering from a headache and would have to cut the morning rehearsal. "Say anything about to-night?" McHugh snapped.

"Yes, sir; that she would surely be on hand for the dress rehearsal."

"Then what you looking so glum about?" McHugh demanded. "Much you care if our morning's wasted?"

"It's the newspapers," Mike answered. "There are four reporters at the stage entrance, and I can't drive them away, sir. They say they won't go till they see you."

McHugh flushed. He sprang over the footlights.

"They'll get their wish," he cried. Quaille followed him.

"Easy, McHugh. We can't afford to make enemies of the papers."

"Ferrets!" McHugh growled. "Wish I could switch Woodford's spook on them. I've no time to waste to-day smoothing Josiah Bunce."

Nevertheless, he faced the four pleasant but persistent young men with a fair amount of restraint. They displayed copies of an early edition of a sensational newspaper. McHugh snatched one away and glanced it over with Quaille. Its leading story played up the revival and the strange difficulties that had threatened it. Most astonishing of all, it contained hints of the vision Quaille had seen, of the flight of the cat, of Wilkins' unaccountable adventure last night.

"Nothing to say," McHugh announced. "You youngsters better see the owners of the building, Robert and Josiah Bunce."

One of the reporters laughed.

"A swell chance we'd have with Josiah! They say the old miser hasn't been out of his house for fifteen years."

"Maybe I'm to blame for that," McHugh said. "So long, boys. I'm more interested in a theatrical production than ghosts."

"I hope that's right, Mr. McHugh," a reporter dared.

McHugh refrained from answering. He reentered the theater with Quaille and dismissed the company.

"All on hand at seven-thirty sharp," he shouted. "There are reporters in the



"The—thing that—limped out there. If it wasn't your trick, it must have been Woodford. His—his cat was with him."

alley. Don't open your mouths to them. I'll run the publicity for this concern, and I'll see that you get plenty of the right kind."

WHEN Quaile and he were driving uptown, McHugh reverted to that astonishing article:

"I never told anybody about the cat slinking out. Did you?"

"That's an absurd question, McHugh."

"All right," the manager took him up. "Then it looks a whole lot like friend Barbara. And why couldn't the rest of it have come from her?"

Quaile wouldn't answer, but he acknowledged the justness of McHugh's conclusion. On the other hand, he could imagine no motive that would have urged Barbara to talk in defiance of the manager's command. He did his best to cover his chagrin.

"No matter where it came from, the publicity will bring a line a mile long to the box-office."

"So it will," McHugh mused. "So it will."

A closed car of a foreign pattern stood in front of the entrance to McHugh's offices. As Quaile and the manager stepped to the sidewalk, the distinguished figure of Robert Bunce emerged from the hallway. McHugh cursed under his breath.

"I knew it. Trouble's breaking already."

Robert, however, revealed no excitement, and only the mildest disapproval. He shook hands formally.

"I dare say you know why I'm here," he said to McHugh. "I come from my brother. He's read this miserable drivel in the papers, and, foolishly, he's let it throw him in a passion. But it is the second time it's happened, and consequently, he says, the last. In a word, Mr. McHugh, he wants to recall the lease and get you and your damaging publicity off our property. I must say I agree with him. But he says you were a trifle of-

fended the last time he talked with you, so I volunteered to see if I couldn't straighten things out—perhaps get your promise to muzzle your press agent."

McHugh cried out:

"As the Almighty's my judge, Bunce, I've had nothing to do with these stories, and they're true—gospel. That theater of yours holds a mystery that's turning me gray, making me doubt my own senses."

Bunce moved back.

"It's inconceivable, Mr. McHugh," he answered in a kindlier tone; "yet you seem to believe what you say. I don't want to be unjust. Suppose you go talk to my brother and see if you can persuade him. He handles our real estate, and I promise you I won't interfere as long as my interests are reasonably protected. I shall probably be there myself before you leave."

"I'll go right away," McHugh accepted. "Get back in the car, Quaile."

They had only a few blocks to go. They alighted in front of the Bunce mansion, which, in the bright sunlight, had a dingier, more disreputable appearance than ever. Its large, heavy front door possessed the aspect of a portal raised against cheerfulness and youth.

McHUGH'S ring brought no response.

He pressed the button again, impatiently. At last the Scotch butler, Watson, threw the door wide. His face was white. His hand on the knob trembled. For once, he had an air of welcome.

"Oh, sirs," he quavered, "come in quick. Thank the Lord you're here."

"What's up, Watson?" asked McHugh.

But Quaile, sufficiently startled by the servant's manner, went through into the twilight of the hall. From the rear he heard a groan, low-pitched, prolonged. Then Josiah's frightened voice arose:

"Watson! Watson! Don't you leave me."

"It's the old man," McHugh cried.

Quaile ran along the hall; but on the threshold of the library he paused.

The shades were no more than half raised. The brilliant sun was not permitted to enter here. Josiah had left his customary chair. He stood in front of the fireplace, his uncouth figure silhouetted against the flames, swaying back and forth, back and forth, while the tatters of his dressing-gown flapped about his ankles. His scanty hair was in disorder. His face was vacant with alarm. He held the fire-tongs loosely in his knotted hand. As McHugh pushed past Quaile, the recluse groaned again. The tongs slipped from his fingers and clattered on the floor.

THE manager strode to him and grasped his shoulders.

"What's happened here, Bunce?"

The other fumbled at McHugh's coat. His voice whined, evidently overcoming a difficulty in his throat, suppliant rather than accusing:

"This is your work, Mr. McHugh."

The manager's grasp tightened.

"What work? That's what I want to know."

"You did it," the old man broke out. "Tell me that you tried to fool me, and I won't be mad. I won't say anything. Didn't you try to frighten me?"

McHugh stepped back, releasing the other's shoulders.

"Sorry, Bunce. Now you tell me what frightened you."

Quaile had a feeling that McHugh could guess the answer.

Josiah motioned toward the hall. His lips moved. He scarcely made himself audible:

"The—the thing that—limped out there."

In the close and insufferable atmosphere of this room Quaile felt suddenly cold. McHugh straightened.

"That limped!" he shot out. "What do you mean? What was it like?"

Bunce wet his lips.

"Like—like Bertrand Woodford."

With an unexpected gesture, McHugh snatched the cigar from his mouth, broke

it in half, and flung the pieces in the fire. Quaile, looking at him, saw purple rage in his face.

"So like," Bunce went on, "that I forgot for a minute it's been forty years since I heard him limp in this house, and I—I called his name. But no one came in, and when I got to the hall it was empty."

He grasped the arms of his chair and drew himself up. His voice rose shrilly:

"If it wasn't your trick, it must have been Woodford, because I heard. His—his cat was with him."

"Quaile," McHugh snarled, "get upstairs. I'll search this floor. Watson, go through the basement with a fine-tooth comb. Hurry, now."

Josiah indicated his approval. Quaile sprang up the stairs, and ran through rooms filled with decaying, old-fashioned furniture. He opened closet doors. He peered behind curtains and under beds, convinced of the fruitlessness of his efforts. He entered the last room, a small apartment, evidently unused; for the blinds were drawn, and in the tranquil green light the dust lay thick on furniture and floor, and cobwebs waved in the angles of the ceiling. He opened the closet door.

HE stiffened, choking back a cry. He closed his eyes, that he might not see. But the picture became more terrible in this self-imposed darkness. So he opened his eyes and gazed again—at Barbara Morgan, crouching in the shadows of the closet, trying pitifully to hide herself where there was no longer any concealment of her atrocious presence from him. He wondered that the contortion of her face did not destroy its beauty.

"I don't know anything about it. For God's sake, don't let them know I'm here. I'd rather kill—"

He couldn't look any longer. He drew away. As her voice failed, a quiet rustling reached him. He glanced back. She lay face downward on the floor of the closet.

To be continued next week

No More Tears for Tears

A BUSY woman journalist doesn't have much time or enthusiasm left over at the end of a strenuous day for a bout with the darning ball or the mending basket. That's why the Mind-Your-Mending Shop started. Miss Eve vom Baur used to come home from her day's work (editing the woman's page of the *Evening Sun*) sometimes with a three-cornered tear, sometimes with the lining loose from her coat, and always, always with a little hump of thread where a button used to be. She didn't have time to look after these small atrocities herself. So Miss vom Baur simply had to buy suit after suit and frock after frock and blouse after petticoat.

One day she talked this matter over with Mrs. J. Searle Barclay, Jr., and the two of them deduced that there ought to be hundreds of other people in a city like New York, both men and women, who were suffering in the same acute way. So, between them, they started the Mind-Your-Mending Shop, and the junior partner's mending pile was the first consignment listed.

This shop does everything for the business woman that she never has time to do for herself. It does everything for the bachelor man that he has never had any one do for him since he grew up. "Our shop is better to a man than a wife is," say its owners modestly; for the more mending and darning a man wants done the better we are pleased. We never scold. We smile."

Men Come in Person

FOR a woman it's a saving in both time and money, they say at the shop, to have her clothes attended to. She only has to buy about half as many when she keeps them in good repair, and that means she only has to shop half as much. Shopping bores the business woman to distraction. As a rule, the women patrons of the Mind-Your-Mending Shop send around a post-

card asking that their mending be called for.

Men, on the other hand, are apt to bring their mending themselves. Sometimes they open it up and, pointing out the defects, explain with great detail what they want done. One man insists that all his colored socks be darned with black because that was the way his mother did them. Sometimes it takes quite a long discussion for a man to tell just how he wants a coat patched or the buttons moved over. Many of the men who are waiting in line stand with their socks draped over their arms, with charming informality, although there are some who wouldn't open their bundles for worlds, nor have them opened in their presence. They blush at the thought; so they do them up in a tight little wad and tie them tight with string. These with a brief nod

and a whispered word they leave at the desk and hurry forth to dive into the nearest subway station.

The manager of the shop sits behind a counter in a little office between the two big work-rooms, noting in a book each package received and any suggestions its owner makes in regard to repairs. Her customers say it gives them a sort of a "homey" feeling to bring their mending in to her. "This is the only domestic hour in my life," said one business man the other day, gratefully handing over a frayed bath-robe.

Besides all matter-of-course repairs, this shop loves to tackle new problems. One day a woman lawyer came in.

"What can I do," she asked, "to keep my dresses smart and fresh when I have to pore over musty law books every day for hours?"

The shop manager made a note. "We'll think about it," she said.

Finally Miss vom Baur solved the problem by inventing the "savafrock," a long, smartly made coat of China silk, which reaches from the chin to the heels. The lawyer looked so chic in it that the shop immediately began to manufacture the "savafrock" by wholesale.

Last week a regular man customer brought in forty-three old-fashioned four-in-hand ties. They were of beautiful material, but out of style. "They are just the patterns and colors I like," he said plaintively, "but my folks won't hear of my wearing them any more." Those old four-in-hands were promptly made over into forty-three nifty little new bow ties which made their owner's eyes sparkle.

They All Wanted to Help

ONE day a gentle old man appeared with a knitted lavender silk scarf, worn almost threadbare.

"Could you possibly repair this?" he asked. "It is dear to me."

Every one of the dozen girls in the shop wanted to have a hand in restoring that scarf. One girl dry-cleaned it. Another shopped to get silk to match the worn lining. Another put the lining in. Another tied new fringe on the ends. There was a bare suggestion of lavender flower fragrance about the tie, and a fifth girl brought fresh lavender flowers and kept the tie in had when its owner returned. When he came in, all the girls stopped their machines and the shop was still as he picked up the tie and held it to the light. "It looks," he said slowly, "just as beautiful as it did the day she made it for me. And, do you know, the lavender fragrance has lasted all these years."

The Mending Shop's customers are charged at the rate of thirty cents an hour for machine work and fifty cents an hour for hand work. Which means, you see, that mother is a potential millionaire.



All the lost buttons in the world go home to roost at the Mind-Your-Mending Shop. At all events you can always find "the living image" of your lost one here. This is the one place in the world where you are doubly welcome if your skirt binding is loose or your cuffs are frayed.

The Mystery at Woodford's

By WADSWORTH CAMP

Illustration by Arthur I. Keller

QUAILE advanced slowly toward Barbara's motionless figure. The main fact—the shameful truth—was beyond contradiction. She had concealed herself in a remote part of this house after the limping footsteps had frightened Josiah Bunce. But he couldn't cry out her guilt as long as a chance remained that she might explain her presence here. He would give her that chance if he could keep the others downstairs:

He stooped and raised her wrists. The flesh was cold under his touch; but she stirred almost immediately, opened her eyes, and endeavored wildly to get to her feet.

"Barbara! he said. "What are you doing here?"

She had struggled to her knees. She paused there and leant back against the wall, breathing harshly.

"You mustn't ask that."

"You will tell me," he said.

But she shook her head. She made herself go on, with odd, uneven pauses between the words.

"You've not forgotten that you love me—that you—promised to trust me? You won't let them know I'm here?"

He was certain then that she held the explanation of Woodford's ghost—a solution infinitely more abhorrent than that spectral one from which he had always shrunk.

"Then you did that," he breathed. "It was you who made the limping footsteps that frightened Bunce."

She glanced up with unstudied bewilderment.

"How can you think that? No. I

heard them. They frightened me, too. I ran here."

"I want to believe you—"

He broke off and grasped her elbows. "Tell me," he begged. "Don't you see you've got to tell me?"

With an impetuous vehemence, she tried to free herself. Her breath caught. "Let go my arm. You hurt. You lied last night. You are going to tell—"

McHugh's shout reached them from the lower floor.

"Quaile! Quaile! You found something up there?"

"What are you going to answer?" she whispered.

He made one last effort.

"You won't explain?"

"No; but if you tell them—"

He let her arms go. He steadied his voice and called:

"Nothing, McHugh—nothing. I'll be right down."

She braced herself against the door-jamb and hid her face.

"I can't wait," he said. "Will you be able to get out unseen?"

Her head moved affirmatively. He looked back from the door.

"Barbara! Barbara! Why did you come here?"

SHE gave no sign. She did not move. So he went slowly along the hall and down the stairs. He sought no excuse for his action. She had challenged the fairness of his own attitude toward her.

He had kept that clean. He had responded to the trust she had placed in him last night. His reward seemed removed forever beyond his grasp. He mustn't think of that. As far as possible, he must strangle thought; for McHugh waited for him at the foot of the stairs, and the former detective had sharp eyes.

"You been gone long enough to find a regiment of ghosts, Quaile."

Quaile managed to answer:

"I wanted to make sure. You and Watson found nothing?"

McHugh spread his hands.

"Never anything but shadows where those footsteps limp."

Quaile at his heels, he walked into the library. Josiah had drawn his rug about his knees. Now and then he shook as if he experienced a sharp chill. Quaile was grateful for the lowered blinds, which kept a too revealing light from his face.

"What am I to do?" Josiah sniveled. "I can't sit here night and day waiting for him to come back."

McHugh sat down.

"Let's get to cases. There's nobody in this house except us four. You've said there was no one here—no servant even—when you sent Watson on the errand."

"Yes; I'm sure."

"How long before we came in did you hear the footsteps?"

"Not more than five minutes. Watson got back right away."

McHugh glanced at the butler.

"You saw nobody, Watson—nobody

coming down the steps or from the kitchen entrance?"

"No, sir."

McHugh frowned. He spoke, Quaile thought, with a pronounced reluctance: "What had you been doing, Bunce—I mean, just before you heard this thing like Woodford walking?"

The recluse reached out and lifted from the table a copy of the newspaper containing the ghostly story of the theater.

"I remember—I was reading this again. I had sent Robert some little time before to find you and bring you back. I was pretty hot, Mr. McHugh. I was going to give you the devil."

McHugh cleared his throat. His irresolution became more noticeable.

"Were you by any chance talking to yourself?"

Quaile caught the trend of his questions.

"Maybe I was," Josiah said.

"Try to think what you talked about," McHugh urged.

"I don't know," Josiah said reflectively. "I was pretty mad. I—I think I said Woodford's ghost would have a fine chance on my property."

He seemed to appreciate the significance of his words. The ashen shade of his cheeks increased. McHugh glanced at Quaile.

"Bunce," he said solemnly, "get over your temper with me. The only place to lay that ghost is right in your theater. Dress rehearsal's to-night. Things are coming to a head. We're all worked up enough. I don't want interference to-night or to-morrow."

"You seem honest," Josiah muttered;

"but if I hadn't heard that thing—" He looked up with a certain slyness. His tone was uncomfortable. "I'd like to be there myself to-night." McHugh grinned. "You, Bunce! They tell me you haven't been out of this house for fifteen years."

THE unkempt head bobbed up and down.

"But I don't want to sit here waiting for that thing to limp back."

His sinewy fingers strained about the chair-arms.

"You are straight, Mr. McHugh, aren't you? You're not playing tricks on me? It isn't advertising?"

"Don't be a fool," McHugh grunted.

"I'd like to be there," he mused. "I'll send Robert, anyway. I wish he was here now."

"He spoke of returning before we left," Quaille said. "When he's heard your experience he may be less doubtful about trusting us."

"We'll wait," McHugh said, "for I want to have a free hand from this minute."

It wasn't long before Watson answered

Robert's ring. The younger brother looked anxiously into the distrustful eyes.

"Have these people been bulldozing you, Josiah?"

McHugh held up his hand.

"Cut the comedy. Tell him the facts, Bunce."

Josiah recited in detail his experience of the footsteps and the cat, while Robert listened incredulously.

"Sounds like Woodford as I remember him," he said, "but—"

He walked to the mantelpiece, and for a long time stared at the fire. McHugh grew restless.

"I got to be running along," he announced. "So, if you've anything to say, better get it off your chest."

"FRANKLY," said Robert, turning, "I don't believe in footsteps without feet."

"That's what I want to get at."

"And you're to be there, Robert," Josiah said. "The dress rehearsal's to-night. They won't play tricks on you."

"Yes, I'll go," Robert answered. "If somebody's trying to make a fool of you as well as of us, you'll find me a strong ally. "If you're on the level, as you put

it, Mr. McHugh, you will find me a lenient judge."

"Then you'll be one," McHugh grunted.

"YOU look," McHugh said, when he and Quaille reached the street, "more upset than Josiah."

"It does worry me," Quaille answered. He knew the uselessness of trying to make excuses. He refused to accompany McHugh to his office. He pleaded the necessity of rest, and hurried home.

But when he had stretched himself on his bed, the need of sleep was vanquished by his turbulent recollections. Wilkins evidently shared his agitation. He heard the leading man moving around in the next room. He went in. A pungent fog of cigarette smoke whirled in the draught from the door. Wilkins swung around as Quaille entered.

"Perfect rot, my not being able to rest, when I know McHugh will probably keep us up most of the night!"

"I can understand," Quaille answered; "but all that smoking's beastly for your nerves."

"Confess I'm doing it to keep them up," Wilkins said. "Wish to the devil

Joyce hadn't ordered me to approach the big scene without a sense of fear. I'm to forget that Woodford fell dead playing it, and that Carlton dropped the same way forty years after. You know, that's the deuce of a proposition to put up to a man."

Quaille agreed. "It is nery of you," he said, "to take it on at all."

"No," Wilkins answered. "I might have thrown McHugh down, but I'm dashed if I could treat myself that way."

Quaille acknowledged that he, too, had found rest impossible. He suggested that they go to his club and cut in a bridge game.

"Something to think about," he said. "I mean, if we don't keep our minds on the game our partners will give us plenty to worry over."

Wilkins accepted eagerly, and they went to the club. They struggled along, as Quaille had prophesied, to the wrath of their partners, until it was time to return to the apartment.

While he dressed, and during their hurried dinner, Quaille's ears were alert for the telephone.

WHEN they reached the theater, Wilkins went through the alley; but Quaille paused on the sidewalk, gazing with a feeling of wonder and encouragement at the transformed façade of the old building. It seemed impossible that where there had been so much darkness, so much dinginess, there should have sprung up such light, such motion, such eagerness.

Most amazing of all, a long line of men and women curved along the sidewalk, up the steps between the slender columns, and to the open box-office window. Such an advance sale was without precedent. Whether McHugh wished it or not, the publicity centering about the occult was bearing golden fruit.

The stained-glass doors glowed with a subdued light from within. For the first time, Quaille realized that he no longer need use the somber alley through which many times he had walked reluctantly to face the old building's manifestations. He walked through one of those pleasant doors.

The house was quite ready for a performance. Its former aspect was one with a morbid dream. Its manifestations assumed the same unreal quality. Surely things would proceed normally to-night. Surely Wilkins would come through.

SUCH thoughts, however, survived only as far as the passage to the stage. As soon as he had started through, he became aware of that customary repellent odor—the shadow, as Dolly always said, of the perfume Woodford had used.

There was more beyond to destroy his fugitive contentment. McHugh, Dolly, and Mike stood in the center of the stage. The flashing borders and the brilliancy of the new scenery pointed the contrast of the drawn faces and the distrust of these two who had known Woodford.

"What's up now?" Quaille asked them. "The brainless idiots!" McHugh muttered, with an artificial scorn. "They've been seeing and feeling things again."

Mike's face worked. "But I did see it, Mr. McHugh."

"What?" Quaille asked.

"A figure, sir. Like him—like Mr. Woodford, except that it was white fire."

Dolly placed her hand on the property-man's arm. He shook from head to foot. He could not keep his mouth still. He was a picture of unconditional fear.

"Just my luck, Quaille, to have you hear that," McHugh lamented. "I won't have a steady pair of knees in the house. You've done enough damage, Mike. Chase back to your job, if your legs'll carry you."

"He's right," Dolly put in. "I warned you this morning, and to-night the cat is closer."

She looked swiftly around.

"As close as the day Mr. Carlton died."

McHugh flung up his hands, but behind his bluster Quaille saw the real extent to which his anxiety had been spurred.

"Shut up, Dolly, and get to your dressing-room. Mike, do as I tell you! Back to your door."

Dolly went, with extreme unwilling-



"Quaille stooped and examined the white skin. 'A cat!' he said. 'That was done by a cat.' McHugh nodded. 'No question.'"

Smile Makers

At Rising Time

Do you know any food which greets you at breakfast so inviting as Puffed Wheat or Rice?

Airy bubbles of grain, flaky, toasted and crisp. Each morsel seems a bonbon.

But you know they are whole grains, made wholly digestible. You know that every atom feeds.

No elements are lacking—none are lost. For in these foods—and these only—every food cell is blasted by steam explosion.



At Dinner Time

These grains are so crisp, so toasted, so flavory that they take the place of nut-meats.

Folks garnish ice cream with them. They use them in candy. They dot them on frosted cake.

Yet Puffed Grains hold supreme place among scientific grain foods. They are made by Prof. Anderson's process. In every kernel a hundred million steam explosions are created. They are perfect foods—the best-cooked cereals in existence.



Puffed Wheat, Except in Far West 12c
Puffed Rice, Far West 15c
 Corn Puffs—Bubbles of Corn Hearts—15c

At Bed Time

The bowl of milk in summer is the favorite bedtime dish. But it's twice as delightful with Puffed Grains floating in it.

These grains are puffed to eight times normal size. They are four times as porous as bread.

You get the whole wheat in Puffed Wheat—all the phosphorus of the outer coats. You get it so it easily, completely digests without any tax to the stomach.

Do you know anything else which so meets the requirements of an ideal good-night dish?

See if you have all these foods on hand.



The Quaker Oats Company

Sole Makers

(1344)

ness, her eyes searching, searching.

McHugh met Mike's appealing glance with an angry wave of his hand.

"It's taking too big chances," Quaille said, when the property-man had gone.

"Maybe so; but I got to take them."

"How did Mike see the—the thing?"

"It was when he came down to open up," McHugh explained. "He says he saw the thing like what you saw come out of Woodford's old dressing-room between the stage-door and the passage."

"And Woodford's dressing-room?" Quaille said. "Surely you haven't put Wilkins there?"

McHugh glared. "Certainly not. Wilkins is where he dressed the night we took the pictures. Dolly and Barbara were together that night, but now I've made them all comfortable."

Quaille could guess the point of McHugh's circuitous announcement.

"You mean?"

McHugh cleared his throat. "That I've assigned Barbara to Woodford's old room."

Quaille flushed, tempted to take issue with the manager on that arrangement.

"You think it safe, McHugh?"

"Why not? Nothing's been after Barbara but you, that I know of."

It wasn't easy for Quaille to press the point. His recollection of Barbara hidden in the Bunce house smothered his resentment. He tried to speak indifferently:

"Is she here yet?"

McHugh's frown was sufficient answer. He glanced at his watch.

"Quarter of eight. If that girl throws me down—"

HE snapped the case shut. "I thought you might know something about her movements, you're so darned friendly with her."

"I know nothing," Quaille said.

"Don't you suppose she understands," McHugh asked fiercely, "that if she fails me I'm beaten?"

"You mean," Quaille asked with dry lips, "that you would accept that as the final proof against her?"

McHugh's tone was ugly:

"I usually mean just about what I say."

He crossed the stage in the direction of Wilkins' dressing-room. Quaille deliberately chose the other side, and walked toward the alley door. He was glad to leave McHugh. He paced rapidly among the new litter of scenery.

He clenched his hands. Perhaps Barbara had not left the Bunce house unobserved. Suppose Robert, Josiah, or the butler had discovered her and had turned her over, as those men would, to the authorities for punishment? Lashed by this fear, he strode to the stage-door.

"Mike," he said, "you're sure you've had no word from Miss Morgan?"

Mike glanced from the door.

"Who's that coming now, sir?"

Quaille stepped out. A furtive figure had entered the mouth of the alley. Although the place was very dark, the figure clung to the thicker obscurity of the theater wall. It approached slowly. Once or twice, Quaille thought, it stopped altogether. Mike drew back.

"I think, sir, it is Miss Morgan."

Quaille turned away, not wishing to believe, yet convinced that Mike was right. She came up, breathing as if she had been running. He spoke to her gently, but she seemed not to hear. As she hurried through the stage entrance he saw that she was dressed exactly as he had last seen her in her hiding-place at the Bunces'.

"You got out," he whispered, close to her.

McHugh slipped from behind a piece of scenery. To all appearances, he had been waiting as anxiously as Quaille. Barbara stepped back.

"Maybe better late than never," McHugh grumbled. "You hustle, Barbara, or you'll hold the show up."

She bowed her head. Quaille scarcely caught her voice.

"I can't go on, Mr. McHugh."

"The devil you can't!"

"I can't—I can't!" she repeated dully. She seemed exhausted. She grasped

the door-knob of Woodford's dressing-room. She leaned wearily against it.

McHugh didn't disguise his temper.

"You cut that temperamental stuff," he cried, "and get in your clothes, or you'll never play on Broadway again; and that's only the beginning of what will happen to you."

"Don't, McHugh," Quaille begged.

"I can't blame him," Barbara said, "but it makes no difference. I won't go on with it."

"Maybe you'll tell us why?" McHugh sneered.

For the first time, she looked directly at him.

"Because I'm afraid."

"What of?"

"Of this place," she whispered. "Of the thoughts—of the ghosts in this place."

The dead level of her tone, which expressed an absolute sincerity, shocked Quaille. He drew McHugh to one side.

"Keep quiet," he said, "and let me talk to her alone. I may change her mind."

McHugh's jaw receded; his flush died away.

"Do that, Quaille, and we'll forget the harsh words all around. Wish I knew what was going on between you two."

"It's of small consequence now," Quaille said, and went slowly back to Barbara.

"What is it you wish?" she asked. "You won't be long? I want to go home. I want to get away from this place!"

"You must stay."

"Oh, no," she said; "I shall not stay."

"The future means nothing to you?" he asked.

She laughed harshly.

"The future! That amounts to very little. It's the present I'm afraid of."

"You mean—"

"The shadows here, and what has happened on that stage; and what may happen again."

"Yet you say you know nothing about it. Then you will do this for my sake. Slowly she shook her head.

"It was you," he said, "who didn't tell the truth last night."

She turned away.

"There's no use talking of that. We must never talk of that again."

He failed to hide his bitterness.

"Leave me out of it. Think of yourself. Barbara, you are going on to-night, and, if we rehearse that scene without another tragedy, you are going on for the opening to-morrow night."

She stammered:

"You—you're commanding me!"

"Since there's no other way."

She cried out angrily:

"And I refuse."

He spread his hands.

"Your refusal sends me to McHugh. A man has died. Another is threatened. I must give what information I can."

Her lips parted.

"You'd tell him—"

"About your secret presence at the Bunces' this afternoon; if necessary, about that hidden thing that screamed in your home last night. You force me to it."

HIS words might have had a tangible power. They repelled her, step by step.

"You sha'n't," she breathed.

"You mean you'll go on?"

She shuddered.

"I tell you, I'm afraid. You wouldn't make me go on?"

His victory was less palatable than defeat would have been.

"McHugh!" he called hoarsely.

There was a stir at the rear. The manager hastened toward them.

"I hate you," she said. "I hate you!" Her laughter had the quality of a sob.

"And they want me to mimic tragedy—on the stage."

"Well?" McHugh asked, coming up.

Quaille looked away.

"She will tell you."

"What's the word, Barbara?"

Quaille would not glance back. He wouldn't face again her fear and her uncertainty. He heard her speak. He had not realized how vital her answer had become to him.

"I'm going on, Mr. McHugh."

McHugh exploded joyously.

"Good girl! I knew you'd come to your senses. You'll be a Mrs. Siddons yet." She spoke through chattering teeth: "In which dressing-room did my maid leave my things?" "I've put you," McHugh answered, "in Woodford's dressing-room." She stiffened. She raised her hands defensively. "You won't make me go there!" McHugh touched the faded gilt star on one of the panels. "Say, you're hard to please. I'm giving you the star dressing-room. Actresses cry for it." "Woodford's room!" she murmured. "Sure. Wasn't he a star? No more talk, now; we're losing time." McHugh's stubborn manner told Quaille that he had a subtle purpose in forcing the girl to use that cheerless room. "There are plenty of places upstairs," she said. McHugh frowned. "They're not ready." He opened the door and stepped past her into the blackness of the little room. Quaille heard a click, and light flashed on stained and desolate walls. The only signs of occupancy were a number of bottles and boxes on the table, and Barbara's clothes, arranged by the maid in the closet of which the door stood half open. She glanced in once. Holding her breath, she crossed the threshold. "After all," she whispered, "what difference does it make?" She closed the door.

McHUGH turned to Quaille, about to question, perhaps to accuse. Quaille could not face that now. Before the manager could speak, he had slipped into the passage. He hurried through, aware of a new, strange humming sound that echoed in the narrow space. But the memory of the last words Barbara had addressed directly to him filled his ears. "I hate you," she had said. "I hate you!" Yet he had guided his course by the single beacon of her welfare.

As he stepped into the auditorium, the explanation of the new sound challenged him to a saner mind. At last a small audience had collected in Woodford's. There were managers or their representatives, critics, friends of McHugh's and the company's, a group that held itself aloof and to which Quaille was attracted by one or two nods of welcome.

Robert Bunce was in the midst of the group. Probably he had brought these people, for they were wealthy, of assured social position. With their evening dress and their laughing chatter, they gave an added touch of cheerfulness to the auditorium.

Quaille went over and spoke to the few he knew. Robert shook his hand, impressed, no doubt, by his acquaintance with friends of his own.

"Well, young man," he said pleasantly, "things are normal enough out here. How about the mystic regions back?" "I wouldn't venture to prophesy," Quaille answered.

Robert glanced around retrospectively. "Many, many years since I've seen a dress rehearsal here. Not a rehearsal, I believe, since Woodford's last revival of this play. My Lord! Am I that old?" "I've read about it," one of the women cried. "Woodford fell dead in the third act."

Robert put his finger on his lips. "Sh-h, my dear. Mustn't recall unpleasant memories to-night. I was no older than you when that happened. You know, Mr. Quaille, my brother was tempted to leave his shell. He would have appreciated this. I must say, it surprises me to see how much life there is in the old place."

Quaille turned at a quiet footfall behind him. Tommy approached the group. "The boss wants you, Mr. Quaille," said Tommy. "We're nearly ready, back there. I'm going to give 'em the first call in a jiffy."

Quaille excused himself and followed Tommy down the aisle and through the passage. McHugh and Joyce waited for him at the other end. The presence of

the psychiatrist added to Quaille's uneasiness. "You'd better get yourself settled, Joyce," McHugh was saying. "Stay back here or go to the auditorium—anywhere you think you'll be most useful." Joyce's face was heavy and serious. "I've done my best with you," he said. "I've told you it is wretchedly unsafe to do that scene. But you're your own master. I'll sit in the box I used the other day, if you don't mind. You think it won't be long now?"

"Not over five or ten minutes." "Then I'm off." Quaille regretted the Englishman's departure. It left him, in a sense, at McHugh's mercy, vulnerable to questions for which he had no answers. Nor did McHugh hesitate.

"Why did you rush off?" "Because I didn't feel like talking." "You'd better talk now," McHugh snorted. "Seems to me I have a right to know why one of my actresses throws the glove in my face, then turns around and takes water from you."

"You would have aroused the antagonism of a Quaker," Quaille answered, ill at ease. "And, as you've guessed yourself, there was more reason why Miss Morgan should have listened to me."

McHugh flushed. "That means nothing. You know something about that girl you haven't told me."

Quaille laughed outright. "I can certainly fling those words in your teeth."

"We're going to have it out," McHugh went on. "You'll give up what you know, or—"

A shrill cry from behind the closed door of Woodford's dressing-room cut across the manager's angry words.

"Barbara!" McHugh cried. As Quaille sprang for the door, he heard Tommy's feet clattering on the iron stairs, his monotonous voice sing-songing the first call. The cry, then, had not penetrated to the other dressing-rooms. He raised his hand, and, afraid to forecast the response, rapped on the panel beneath the faded star. Through the silence that followed, he heard a gasping sound. There was no other answer.

"Get in," McHugh ordered. Quaille grasped the knob, turned it, and opened the door on complete darkness. The gasping sound was more audible. He entered, groping through the obscurity. "Who put out this light?" McHugh roared.

QUAILE heard him stoop and strike a match. The flame glimmered on Barbara. She sat in front of the dressing-table, in the costume of the period of Woodford's youth. Her head had fallen forward. Her difficult breathing persisted. Her right hand hung limply at her side. Immediately she raised it and hid it in the folds of her gown.

McHugh reached up and snapped the control of the electric fixture. There was no response. "Mike!" he shouted. "Mike!" The match expired. He struck another one as the property-man paused on the threshold, glancing in with frightened eyes.

"This light's burned out. Get a new bulb here." Mike refused to enter. "I put a new globe in this morning," he said.

"It was a frost. Get another double-globe."

Mike turned, shaking his head. Suddenly the room was full of light. The globe burned brightly again.

"The devil!" McHugh muttered. "Go away, Mike. Don't try to argue with me." He closed the door and advanced toward Barbara. Her breathing was quieter, but the chalky whiteness of her face made Quaille afraid to speak. McHugh had no scruples.

"You make all that fuss just because the light went out?"

At first she did not answer; but, if that were all, it furnished sufficient excuse for Quaille.

"None of the other lights in the house

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were affected," he said. "There was no reason for this one to go out and come on again."

Barbara turned slowly. "It was your fault," she managed to say.

McHugh was insistent. "What for, besides the light?" "Because," she said, with that same effect as of chattering teeth, "when the light went out, I knew—I wasn't alone in this hateful room."

She bent forward against the table, burying her head in the curve of her left elbow. Her right hand, Quaile noticed, still remained hidden in the folds of her gown.

"How were you so sure," McHugh asked, "that there was somebody in the room?"

"I heard footsteps," she said: "the footsteps we heard the other night—footsteps that limped."

McHugh placed his hand on her shoulder.

"Go on," he said more gently. "Then you screamed."

But she shook her head. "Not then."

McHugh started. "What more could have happened?"

Her voice gathered strength: "Something sprang at me. I couldn't see it or feel it; but I knew it was there, lithe and—and black."

She took her hand from the folds of her dress. Glancing up, she slowly raised it, exposing the under side of the wrist.

QUAILE stooped swiftly, and, without touching it, examined the white skin. In one place it was scarred with a long, jagged scratch, and against the pallid flesh one or two drops of blood stood out. She hid her hand again. Quaile looked at McHugh.

"A cat!" he said. "That was done by a cat."

McHugh nodded. "No question."

Quaile saw his unfriendliness and antagonism for Barbara replaced by a bewildered pity, a genuine remorse. To him too, unquestionably, this attack suggested Barbara's total ignorance of the theater's mystery—destroyed, beyond a doubt, his suspicion of her connection with it. The manager, in fact, hurried Quaile's thought into words.

"I'd bet a house and farm you're not acting now, Barbara. And that door's not been opened since you first came in. I own up, I've had my eye on it all the time. That cat has got to be in this room still."

"And whoever limped," Quaile said.

He spread his hands toward the bare, stained walls and the closet where the door stood open, permitting a thorough view of its interior.

"Spookier than ever!" McHugh mused. Barbara raised her head.

"I didn't want to come in here—I didn't want to go on."

McHugh took her hands.

"You forget what a cross old cuss I've been, Barbara. Remember, I've got a lot on my mind. I'll make it up to you. I'll star you on Broadway in letters big enough to make Sarah Bernhardt look like a chorus girl."

"You mean," she whispered, "that I have to go on?"

"Sure. You're nery; you're not going to let me be beaten by a pack of shadows."

"Oh, I can't! I can't!"

She glanced appealingly at Quaile. He, as thoroughly as McHugh, after what had just happened, answered to an unaccountable ambition to avoid defeat.

"McHugh is right," he said softly. "You must go on."

She began to fumble among the make-up paraphernalia on her dressing-table.

"My maid!" she said wildly. "I had

Mike telephone her. Why isn't she here? And I won't stay in this room. I can't do that for you."

"All right," McHugh agreed. "When your maid comes, have her move your things. Double up with Dolly, and I'll have another room fixed for you in the morning."

THERE was a discreet tapping at the door. Quaile opened it, and the silent maid of Barbara's apartment, dressed as always in black, stalked in. Quaile left the room. After a moment McHugh followed him.

"Makes me feel like a criminal, Quaile. I guess I'm a bum manager, after all."

"This has upset your calculations?" McHugh didn't answer directly.

"Wouldn't it yours?" he flashed.

"If you'd only be frank, McHugh! If you'd only been frank from the beginning! Tell me what's in your mind."

McHugh kept his face averted.

"Don't think hard of me because I'm a clam. I'm trying to be as good a sleuth as I know how, but no detective ever went up against a proposition like this."

He walked away. His step faltered. He did not once look back.

Quaile remained for some time, staring at the panels that divided him from Barbara and the stealthy maid.

Tommy's banging at the doors, his raucous voice, aroused him. He watched the company assemble in the wings. Barbara's door opened. She walked out. She passed close to Quaile, but she did not glance at him. She hurried past and took up her position at the entrance she must use in the first act. Her make-up, skilfully arranged as it was, did not cover the drawn lines of her face. Her maid followed her out and, bearing an armful of clothing, glided across the wings to the iron stairs. McHugh's voice came, extraordinarily repressed for him:

"All set. Curtain in two minutes."

Quaile walked through to the auditorium, and sat apart in the last row. The spectators were scattered in little groups now among the seats, expectant, almost silent. He envied their ignorance of what he had just experienced.

THE footlights blazed. The curtain waved and arose with a deliberate smoothness. The stage was exposed. The rehearsal began. Quaile watched, absorbed by the picture.

Little by little, as the play progressed, a curious idea took possession of him. The surroundings, the archaic costumes worn by these actors and actresses who revived old passions and old humors, seemed, to his sensitive imagination, actually to have brought back to the theater its atmosphere of half a century ago.

Barbara alone retained the power to draw him back to the present. She played with a feverish haste. Her movements were uneven. Once, when she cried in Dolly's arms, he knew her grief was real.

There were no interruptions. The first act hastened to its close. The curtain fell. Quaile glanced at his watch, computing the brief time that would elapse before they faced the big scene of the third act. He saw Joyce leave the box and go back, but he remained where he was. He didn't want to go back. He didn't want to face Dolly, with her assurance of a cat; or Barbara, with its marks upon her arm; or Wilkins, who ran the gravest risk and constantly confessed his understanding of it.

The guests were noisy in their approval. Robert strolled up and sat with him during a portion of the entr'acte. He was warmly congratulatory.

"You've kept the spirit," he said. "There are very few changes. Still, it doesn't creak. McHugh must realize—and that's the best argument in his favor—that the play doesn't need such ridiculous publicity. Anyway, things seem to be going smoothly enough. You know, Mr. Quaile, it rolls the years back. This place seems to me as it was then."

"I've been thinking something like that," Quaile answered moodily.

The curtain rose. The second act ran

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its course. Now the players were not so sure of their lines. From time to time the voice of Tommy, prompting, reached Quaille. It was clear that the strain increased.

Quaille counted the minutes during the second *entr'acte*. He watched hypnotically as the curtain rose on the third act. The piece ran quickly toward the big scene. He longed for McHugh's power to stop the play before it should be too late. He had seen Carlton die precisely as Woodford had died. Now Wilkins, for the first time, would follow those directions, would repeat those lines.

It wasn't to be borne. He agreed with Barbara and Dolly. It was like murder to drive Wilkins to that point.

With an effort he restrained his desire to cry out. He recalled McHugh's cleverness. The man must know what he was about.

Wilkins made a brave defense, but the panic against which Joyce had warned him was frequently discernible in his voice and his actions. His control, however, was greater than Carlton's had been. Nevertheless his strength seemed to have evaporated. He was like one who has suffered from a destructive fever.

Dolly's eyes sought again—perpetually sought something she never saw. Bar-

bara's steady watchfulness of Wilkins was no less disturbing. As if her glance included nothing else, she stumbled about the stage, supporting herself when she could against pieces of furniture, clinging now and then to the draperies across the doors.

This increasing apprehension, this unwillingness to proceed, impressed itself upon the audience. Men and women made restless movements, glanced at each other uneasily, commenting in low tones. But more than any one else Joyce appeared moved. He was bent far forward over the railing of the box. His fingers were white and tense against the red velvet. His glance was absorbed by Wilkins.

ALMOST before Quaille realized it, the company, for the first time since Carlton's death, had entered that tragic scene. It was the genuine anguish of Barbara's denunciation that aroused him. As Wilkins strode to the mantelpiece and snatched up the heavy candlestick, his gesture had the abandonment of a blind despair. Dolly screamed her line:

"Marjorie! Look out!"

Quaille started from his chair. The cry had the broken ring of a dreadful sincer-

ity. Its warning was for Wilkins rather than for the girl.

Barbara, however, continued with the directions Quaille had copied from Woodford's yellow script. She backed to the wall, raising her hands against Wilkins. Her gasping voice scarcely carried across the footlights:

"Be careful! What are you going to do to me?"

Wilkins turned, lifting the candlestick, about to spring for her. His open mouth had an appearance of gaping wonder. The line, which death had forbidden two men to speak, started from his lips in a hoarse whisper:

"Pay what debts I can. Kill you, if the strength—"

The candlestick slipped from his fingers and clattered on the boards. His whisper failed. He crumpled and fell to the stage, without a cry, without a saving gesture.

Quaille, half way down the aisle, paused, crushed by the sudden blackness that descended upon the house. And through this rapid and unexpected night tore screams and the incoherent movements of panic. But, above it all, from the stage he could hear the measured beat of limping footsteps.

To be continued next week

"I Have a Few Hundred Dollars"

By ALBERT W. ATWOOD

I have a few hundred dollars to invest. Can you give me a list of good \$100 bonds of electric light and power companies which are available?

ONE of the most difficult features about investing money is to know just what to buy when you have saved the money and made up your mind to invest it. There are thousands of bonds and stocks, and even the experienced business man hardly knows how to choose among them. This is where the skilful bond salesman comes in. A little persuasion at the right moment has great weight with a person who is doubtful and puzzled by a multiplicity of offerings and possibilities. But most investors would rather not be too much persuaded by interested parties.

Many readers of this magazine are not satisfied with general suggestions as to what class of securities to buy. They want to know exactly which stocks or bonds to decide upon. Of course, it is desirable for investors to learn to act upon their own initiative and learn the difference between a sound and a questionable offering. But, at the same time, it is possible to name in this article quite a number of \$100 bonds that are regarded as safe.

The reader must remember that the prices quoted are subject to change, and that dealers who have a supply of bonds this month or week or day may be out of them later on.

A Good \$100 Bond

A LIST of good \$100 bonds is given on page 8 of "Making Your Money Work For You" (which will be sent on request and 4 cents in stamps). An excellent \$100 bond not mentioned in that list is the American Telephone & Telegraph collateral trust 4 per cent. It may be bought for \$92, and comes due in thirteen years, which is neither too long nor too short a time for a bond to run. This works out nearly 5 per cent. on one's money, and there is probably no bond easier to sell at any time. The company owns the Bell Telephone lines, and pays 8 per cent. dividends on \$400,000,000 of stock after meeting the interest on its bonds. There is no question as to their safety.

There has been a considerable increase in the supply of \$100 bonds in the last few months because of the forced return of the best American securities from England. This supply has consisted mostly of railroad bonds of very high grade. The supply of \$500 bonds, mostly railroad issues, also has been increased

from the same cause. Any one who wants an absolutely safe bond to pay \$20 a year had better purchase an Atchison adjustment at about \$425. Not only is there no flaw in its safety, but it is the sort of bond that can always be sold or borrowed upon anywhere.

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Three very well known companies engaged in manufacturing that have \$100 bonds are the General Electric, New York Air Brake, and Lackawanna Steel. The first named has long been one of the strongest corporations in this country. No bond could be safer than its 3½ per cent. debentures, to be had in \$100 pieces. These cost about \$82, at which price the percentage return is around 4½. The other two companies are exceedingly prosperous at the present time with war orders, and in any case their bonds would hardly be affected by a cessation of war business. Lackawanna Steel pays \$5 on a bond that costs about \$94, and the New York Air Brake Company pays \$6 a year on bonds which now cost \$103.

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The Mystery at Woodford's

By WADSWORTH CAMP

Illustration by Arthur I. Keller



"'Tommy!' he shouted. 'Mike! Will somebody ring down?'"

QUAILE waited only a moment—that brief moment during which the limping steps trailed across the stage and died away. Their cessation cleared his mind for the actual crisis. Wilkins had fallen as Carlton had died—as Woodford had been stricken forty years before. The only variation had been this invasion of the theater by a darkness, thick almost to fluidity. Somewhere in that darkness sat Joyce, who had warned McHugh not to attempt the scene. Beyond him lay Wilkins on the floor of the stage. Quaile had no doubt that he, like the other two, was dead.

The screams of the women in the auditorium were less restrained. The stirrings about him—the rustling of skirts, the undirected stumbling of anxious feet—increased. But at first there was no sound from the stage.

Then, as Quaile started to feel his way down the aisle, McHugh's voice came huskily out of the darkness:

"Light, here! Mike!"

The old property-man's broken accents followed:

"Mr. McHugh, he's here! His dressing-room! I knew all along—"

A MATCH scraped on the stage. A blazing spot appeared in the center of the pall and appeared to smolder, leaving ragged fringes of darkness. McHugh's face was lighted—a face as grim as it was alarmed; and the black shroud was destroyed a little above the quiet heap that Wilkins made.

Before Quaile could understand, the house was brilliant again. He scrambled across the footlights. McHugh bent over Wilkins, fumbling about his heart. Dolly had sunk in a chair. Her face was hidden

by her wrinkled hands. She muttered to herself, shivering, something about a cat. Barbara was braced against the table, staring at Wilkins' motionless figure.

As he ran toward McHugh, Quaile glanced at the auditorium. The rush for the doors had subsided a little. Joyce had climbed to the railing of his box, and, crouching upon it like some strange animal, was about to spring to the stage.

McHugh glanced away from Wilkins. "Ring down!" he cried.

The curtain remained suspended. Quaile guessed that Tommy had fled to the alley. McHugh arose.

"Tommy!" he shouted. "Mike! Will somebody ring down?"

Mike's haggard face appeared at the side. He grasped the cable that controlled the curtain, and began to tug at it with jerky and nearly futile efforts. When it fell at last, the dirty canvas imprisoned them closer with their fear.

Quaile touched McHugh's arm; his question seemed unnecessary:

"He's—dead?"

The tight lips parted:

"Not dead."

A laugh rang out. Its shrill mirth was brutal, nearly blasphemous.

Quaile swung around, revolted. Barbara had not altered her tense and spell-bound attitude, but there was no doubt. It was she who had laughed. Her mouth was still open. Her face was without emotion. It was the face of one temporarily stripped of reason. Quaile went to her with a swift concern.

Before he could touch her, before he could speak, a black figure stole from the wings and grasped her arm. Quaile answered to a hot anger against this silent maid, whose features and bearing furnished

an impenetrable veil for her thoughts, who glided about her mistress with a stealth almost insolent.

"You will take her to her dressing-room?" Quaile asked.

The woman's mouth moved. He thought it formed the word yes—he couldn't be sure. He watched Barbara follow her across the stage and from his sight with the dumb faith of a little child.

WHEN he turned back, McHugh and Joyce were whispering.

"A doctor!" McHugh cried.

Dolly uncovered her face.

"It isn't too late? Because the cat—"

"Take hold here, Quaile," McHugh directed. "And, Mike, if you can't find Tommy, go for a doctor yourself—the first one you can nab."

"The police—" Quaile suggested.

"He's alive. We don't want the police."

McHugh stooped and raised Wilkins' feet. Quaile lifted the shoulders. The head rolled from side to side. They carried him to his dressing-room and stretched him on a sofa. Dolly tottered after them and, uninstructed, got water. She placed Wilkins' head in her lap and bathed his temples and cheeks.

"Perhaps he'll pull through," Joyce said from the doorway, "but it's no thanks to you, McHugh. He evidently retained just enough resistance."

A violent controversy reached them from the stage. Quaile recognized Robert Bunce's angry tones above a murmur of protesting voices. McHugh flushed.

"Look out!" Quaile advised. "He's got a strong case against you."

He returned to the stage. The space between the curtain and the walls of the scenery—small at best—was crowded with

men and women from the audience whose curiosity had been greater than their fright. Quaile recognized the three men facing Robert as dramatic critics. The great dailies they represented would carry beneath scare-heads to-morrow sensational stories of the rehearsal. He knew that Robert was determined to stop this publicity.

"Don't talk to me about spirits," Quaile heard him cry, in response to a mild inquiry. "McHugh is the only ghost I'm afraid of in this house."

He turned wrathfully on Quaile: "The pack of you ought to be handled for staging such a scare!"

Quaile shrugged his shoulders. "Do we look as if we'd had anything to do with it?"

"Where's that mountebank McHugh?" Robert demanded. "At least, he has authority to drive these scandalmongers from the house."

McHugh walked from the wings. His squared jaw foreboded a tempestuous argument, but when he spoke the words reached Quaile with an exceptional mildness:

"I'm no angel, but somebody spoke my name."

Robert strode over to him. "I sha'n't retract the mountebank, McHugh. It's as well you heard. Will you kindly clear these newspaper men out of here? Then we'll get down to business."

"Certainly bad business for me to offend the critics," McHugh grunted. "I have to pretend to love the vipers. Boys, stay as long as you want—but I know you want to go now. You've got all the dope I'll give anybody. Wilkins is alive, and a doctor's on the way. We have to get quiet."

The critics consulted. They agreed to

retreat to the lobby in return for McHugh's promise to send them the result of the doctor's diagnosis. McHugh aroused Mike sufficiently to clear the stage of all those who had no business there. Then he turned to Robert, who accepted the challenge of his glance.

"Now you'll listen, McHugh. There's no question in my mind that your actor aped the manner of Woodford's death and of Carlton's accident. It's a good story—the best of the lot; but it's brought us to the parting of the ways."

McHugh had resumed a long-abused cigar. "What you mean—the parting of the ways?"

"I mean that you're an ideal showman. Perhaps Carlton died a natural death. That may have suggested the way to fill your pockets. I charge you with my brother's scare this afternoon. You and Mr. Quaille and Watson were alone in the house with him, and a servant's palm is easily greased. I charge you with arranging this business-to-night for the benefit of your audience. But you've forgotten there's an undesirable-tenancy clause in your lease, and Josiah and I have warned you. You'll be off our property to-morrow morning."

McHugh snatched a folded paper from his pocket and shook it in Robert's face.

"I've read this lease a good many times," he snarled, "and I went over it again with my lawyer this afternoon. You get an injunction, and I'll get an order vacating it in half an hour. By the time you've proved the nature of my tenancy the show will have gray whiskers, and then you'll find it's clean as soap."

"He's quite right, Mr. Bunce," Quaille said. "McHugh, why don't you let him glance at Wilkins?"

"What's the use?" McHugh sneered. "He's too practical."

Robert looked at him closely. "If you're so sincere in your innocence, why hesitate to let me examine the actor?"

McHugh turned and stalked toward Wilkins' dressing-room. "You're on. Come see for yourself."

THEY filed through the doorway. Dolly still bathed the actor's head. Joyce leaned against the table. Quaille saw Robert's expression change as he took in this picture.

He tiptoed to the sofa, and placed his hand on Wilkins' forehead. In response to the contact, the actor's head swayed with a comatose helplessness. Robert glanced up.

"Good heavens!" he breathed. "There's no sham here."

For the first time he appeared to see Joyce. "What does he say? He's a doctor?"

McHugh shook his head. He explained who Joyce was and why he was in the theater. Robert straightened. He approached Joyce and stared at him curiously.

"You don't ask us to take this seriously as—as supernatural?"

"Somebody must," Joyce answered. "I warned Mr. McHugh, and he refused to listen to me. The result is before you."

Robert turned to McHugh. The uncertainty of his manner increased. "Mr. McHugh, I regret my temper a moment ago. I don't pretend to understand, but surely you're not to blame."

"Thanks," McHugh replied. "I tried to tell you I was honest this morning."

Joyce spoke earnestly: "Don't add to his stubbornness, Mr. Bunce. I have studied this house. I have opened my mind to its atmosphere. I tell you unreservedly that the building harbors an evil force beyond human control."

McHugh's voice vibrated with a repressed fury:

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A BRISK knock shook the panels of the door. Dolly looked up from her task of bathing Wilkins' temples. McHugh opened the door for a tall man in evening clothes. He had a forceful, intelligent face.

"Is this Mr. McHugh?" he asked. The manager nodded.

"What's happened here?" the man went on. "The place is full of hysterics. Nobody outside will tell me anything rational. That man has been hurt?"

"See for yourself?" McHugh asked.

"It's your opinion I'm after, not mine." The doctor advanced to Wilkins, stooped above him, drew back one of the tight eyelids, took the pulse.

"Complete coma," he said in a puzzled voice. "I shall make a more thorough examination, and I must ask some questions. This lady—will she remain and help me? Can she answer—"

"Sure," McHugh broke in. "She can answer all sorts of questions—maybe more than you'll want to ask. You're kicking us out, eh?"

"There are too many in this small room," the doctor said.

"Never mind. We'll wait for the word near by. Come on, boys."

He led Joyce, Robert, and Quaille from the room, and closed the door. He brought a chair and stationed himself just outside. Joyce and Robert stood close to him, discussing the mystery in undertones. Quaille stepped to the stage and called to Tommy.

"Miss Morgan," he said, "was moved upstairs before the rehearsal. Which is her dressing-room?"

"One flight up to the right," Tommy answered, "but she ain't there. Mr. Quaille, has the doctor said anything yet?"

"She's not there!" Quaille echoed. "Surely she hasn't had time to change." "Didn't change," Tommy said. "Took it on the run with a long black cloak over

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her costume. Her maid chased after her, carrying a bag and a bundle. How is Mr. Wilkins? The doctor—

But Quaille had turned away. Barbara had left, and her bearing had been that of flight. She had taken everything with her. It fixed her intention of not returning. Quaille walked back to the three men outside the actor's door. He paced up and down the wings, out of ear-shot, until the door opened.

The doctor's expression was perplexed. Quaille went nearer in time to hear McHugh's gruff inquiry:

"What's the answer?"

"He's coming out of it. It's almost like a trance. He has practically no symptoms, no recollection. That old woman in there—she's superstitious, if anything."

McHugh grunted.

"Can't diagnose it, eh?"

The doctor glanced around uneasily.

"Not yet. I'd like to watch the case for a day or two."

"I want to know, doc, if I can get the man to my automobile and home."

The physician ran his fingers through his hair.

"I should say you could, and that's another thing that floors me. I've given him a restorative, and he's sitting up, little more than dazed."

"Then let's take him," McHugh snapped. "It isn't healthy for him here."

The doctor admitted them. Wilkins sat on the sofa, his head buried in his hands. Dolly stood opposite. McHugh entered and threw the actor's coat over

his costume and placed his hat on his head. Wilkins didn't stir.

"How you feel?" McHugh asked.

Wilkins' voice was muffled and husky from behind his hands:

"I don't know. I—I feel sick."

But when the doctor and McHugh lifted him he scarcely swayed. With a lifeless motion he lowered his hands. From out the chalky pallor of his face, febrile eyes gleamed.

"Why do you stare at me?" he cried, with a childish petulance. "Can't you leave me alone? Oh, my God!"

McHugh warned the others to silence. With the doctor's help, he led Wilkins out of the room, across the stage, and down the alley.

Quaille walked home alone, feeling himself pointedly excluded by McHugh; but when he arrived at his apartment, the manager and the doctor sat in his study. As he entered McHugh put his finger to his lips.

"Wilkins?" Quaille asked.

"Doc here's given him some dope. Not likely to wake before morning, is he, doc?"

"Certainly he ought not to," the doctor said.

McHugh glanced at Quaille.

"Then leave him in peace until I get here to-morrow. No use thrashing over these things. I want his mind fresh for me."

With an effort Quaille choked his exasperation.

"You'll try to urge him on?"

"As loud as money'll talk."

"I shouldn't care to try it," the doctor said. "A strange case from every angle. If physical means were responsible, I should look for more physical reaction."

McHugh jumped up.

"We're taking possession of Quaille's hearth and fireside. I've more to do to-morrow than I like to think about. Got to have some sleep; so, if I'm going to take you home first, we'd better get a move on."

NOR would McHugh yield an inch when he arrived at the apartment next morning. He was clothed with an unaccustomed and startling precision. His necktie was new, colorful. A white carnation—hitherto unheard-of decoration for him—snuggled in his buttonhole. Yet Quaille's interest was captured by the flushed cheeks, the eyes, sparkling and purposeful.

"I shall suspect you of magic, McHugh! You don't mean to say you've persuaded Wilkins?"

"Sure thing."

"Then you've told him," Quaille said, "more than you're willing to admit to me, or else the man's courage is unhuman."

McHugh grinned. He fondled his boutonniere.

"You're too suspicious, Quaille."

"I'm not blind. You must have given positive assurances that he'd be safe to-night."

"On my oath, I did nothing of the kind—because I couldn't. He runs his chances, as he did last night."

"In that case," Quaille took him up, "maybe you'll tell me what makes you so cheerful?"

"Wouldn't believe me, but I'll give myself away that far."

McHugh bent closer. The satisfaction in his eyes was real.

"It's because I've every reason to feel that to-night's the turning-point. After the performance I guess I'll be able to say for sure whether what's happened is due to Woodford's ghost or flesh and blood. Say, Quaille, after all the uncertainty we've suffered down there, isn't that enough to make a man cheerful?"

Quaille wasn't satisfied.

"May I ask if you're certain the rest of the company will stick?"

"Heard from 'em all—except Barbara." Quaille knew that he flushed.

"What about her, McHugh?"

The manager backed out of the room.

"I got to hustle. No time to gossip about her or anybody now. Lots of important people to see this morning. Why else you suppose I dolled myself up this way? Say, keep off Wilkins on the sub-

ject of the theater; I've forbidden him to mention it."

"I promise not to pump him, if that's what you mean."

McHugh had gone. The barrier remained as forbidding as ever.

When, later, Quaille knocked at Wilkins' door, the response was sleepy and grudging.

"How do you feel?" Quaille asked, going in. "Anything I can do?"

Wilkins' reply was ungracious:

"Nothing but let me sleep. I feel like the devil."

So Quaille closed the door. With nothing else to do, he shut himself in the study and called up Barbara's apartment. The voice that replied was not hers.

"It is very important I should speak to Miss Morgan. Will you ask her?"

"Miss Morgan hasn't risen," a lifeless voice came back. "It is useless to call up again. She will see or speak to no one to-day."

"Is she ill?"

"I think not."

"She will be at the theater to-night?"

It was maddening. The woman's tone did not vary; it expressed no interest: "I wouldn't venture to say."

The breaking of the connection suggested a studied impertinence.

His fear for Barbara increased. Just one thing was left that he could do in her behalf. He would find out if she had been discovered at the Bunce's.

WATSON'S greeting was friendly—as of one companion in arms to another.

"It's Mr. Quaille!" he called, and he pointed in the direction of the library.

"Go right on back if you want to speak to Mr. Josiah."

But Josiah, it was evident, did not share Watson's feeling of comradeship.

"What do you want, Mr. Quaille?" he asked. "People are making too free with my house."

"No more footsteps, I hope," Quaille said.

Josiah's distrust was tinged with curiosity.

"You didn't come here to ask that. But I haven't heard any, since you're so anxious. I've read the papers, and Robert tells me you and Mr. McHugh are right. I'll have to get rid of that place. Well, what do you want? When people come to see me to ask after my comfort, they usually want to borrow money. They don't get it."

Quaille managed a smile.

"I was passing by. I really wanted to know how you were after your scare."

It was many minutes before he found the courage to hint at the questions that had brought him, and then they drew no valuable replies. He gathered only that Josiah had no idea of the girl's invasion of his house. He had never met Barbara Morgan. He had never seen her—never heard of her before this revival.

As Quaille was going, Josiah called him back and spoke with a halting restraint:

"So McHugh's going to try to give that performance to-night, after all?"

Quaille marveled at the old man's swift transformation. There was a movement, hinting at slyness, about the corners of his mouth. It gave to the next words an added importance:

"I'd like to see what happens to Mr. McHugh."

Quaille left, took the subway to Wall Street, and sought Robert in his luxurious office. But the younger Bunce had little more to offer than his brother.

"I've seen Miss Morgan on the stage," he answered, "and I've heard of her, of course, as an exceptional young actress."

He returned to his rooms, where Wilkins still rested. When the actor appeared, Quaille had no difficulty in following McHugh's wishes. Wilkins was uncommunicative, bristling with guarded information; yet his bearing suggested that that knowledge was not wholly comforting.

SO much had intervened since Dolly's fright over the telephone that Quaille had nearly forgotten those wayward warnings. He knew that the actor was in the study when the attenuated and remote bell sound took him off his guard. He ran in,

anxious to spare Wilkins; but he was too late. Wilkins already had the receiver at his ear, had started back.

"Drop it!" Quaille commanded. "You mustn't listen."

He snatched the receiver from Wilkins' hand and replaced it.

"So that's it!" the actor breathed. "That's what happened the other night!"

Quaille's suspense grasped him. He cursed this evil chance at the last moment.

"Woodford!" Wilkins went on. "That queer ringing! That unnatural voice!"

Quaille spread his hands.

"What did you hear?"

"A straight warning," Wilkins answered—"an unqualified threat of death if I tried it again."

"Magic!" Quaille muttered. "McHugh isn't clever enough—"

Wilkins grasped at the name.

"I must get to him with this. Finish dressing. Let's hurry to the theater."

And, all the way down, he gave himself more and more thoroughly to a morose indecision.

WILKINS went to the stage entrance, while Quaille elbowed his way into the lobby. Although it was early, the crowd there was thick and restless. A cardboard sign above the box-office window informed those without tickets that the house was sold out.

As the doorman let him in, ticket-holders pressed forward with a fanatical eagerness. Quaille hastened to the stage, where he found McHugh alone. The manager was in evening clothes. He chewed with an unusual absorption at his cold cigar. He answered Quaille's inquiry as to Wilkins with an absent-minded air:

"I've talked to him, and he's dressing."

"I wish I knew your power over him."

McHugh studied his cigar.

"I wish," he answered, "it didn't make me feel like a criminal to use my power."

Quaille saw that the former detective was less sure of himself than he had been the night before.

"The rest of the company?" he asked.

"All here," McHugh answered, "putting on the frills and paint."

Quaille experienced a vast relief. Then Barbara was not ill.

McHugh had moved to the spot where Carlton and Wilkins had fallen after the manner of Woodford. He glanced at the single border, which was all that burned at this early hour. Quaille wondered what he had in his mind. Then the manager walked to the wings, and returned immediately with the candlestick that Carlton had held at the moment of his death—that Wilkins had grasped before his fall last night.

"Perfectly good candle in it," McHugh mused, "and it's a waste of my good money, because it doesn't once get lighted during the whole play. Put a little fire to it, Quaille."

Quaille obeyed, puzzled.

"What do you want of it, McHugh?"

"Hold it up, so," McHugh directed, when the wick was blazing. "And don't do anything else until I pass the word."

"What's your idea?"

But McHugh left the stage without answering, so Quaille stood as he was, holding the candle aloft while he tried to sound McHugh's purpose.

Tommy entered from the wings.

"Better smother the light, Mr. Quaille," the assistant advised. "There's a fireman outside, and the laws are strict."

McHugh reappeared. He looked at Quaille with a bland surprise.

"What you doing, Quaille? Rehearsing Liberty enlightening the world?"

The manager, beyond a doubt, desired Tommy's ignorance of his share in the experiment. He blew out the candle, took it from Quaille, and gave it to Tommy.

"I was wondering," Quaille said, accepting the hint, "how it would look lighted in the third act."

McHugh smiled his thanks.

"Nothing doing," he said. "Tommy's got the correct dope on the fire laws."

When Tommy had left, McHugh still refused to explain his odd request or his secretive manner. He moved here and there about the stage with an apparent

lack of purpose. Quaille, to whom he no longer said anything, strolled to the foot of the iron staircase and waited until the company began to appear. When Barbara descended, the maid still guarded her. Nevertheless Quaille went closer.

"You must give me a moment," he begged.

Barbara turned away.

"It is no use. I can't talk to you yet."

The stolid maid would not move, but Quaille had caught a wistful note of desire in Barbara's reply.

"Then afterward," he said.

But she would not speak to him again. Discouraged, and foreseeing only evil, he walked through the passage to the auditorium.

WOODFORD'S was already nearly crowded. The old theater was alive again, as it had not been alive last night, as it had not lived since its old director's death. And in the warm mingling of perfumes that arose from its audience the singular odor of the scent Woodford had used was finally drowned.

Quaille entered the lobby. A procession of automobiles crept along the curb. Policemen helped empty them.

Quaille's glance rested, fascinated, on one of the cars there. It had drawn up. Robert Bunce had descended and waited while from its depth painfully emerged a bent and patriarchal figure. Gray hair strayed from beneath an antiquated top hat. A shawl—recalling a custom many years forgotten—was draped across the shoulders. And after him came Watson carrying a cushion, furnishing the final touch to the picture of an invalid on his first outing.

Between Robert and Watson, and leaning on his cane, Josiah tottered up the steps of Woodford's, once very familiar to his youthful tread.

Quaille wondered if this adventure could account wholly for the recluse's determination that morning. As he advanced to meet him, the bystanders audibly snickered at the little group. Josiah seemed a trifle dazed. Robert was completely conscious of the attention his brother attracted.

"He would come," he said to Quaille. "He was bound, in one way or another, the audience should have its money's worth."

Josiah's lips worked.

"Suppose you're trying to say I'm a show in myself. I never was stylish. Can't you get us through, Mr. Quaille? I want to sit down."

Quaille went ahead, clearing a passage.

Josiah paused at the rear of the auditorium, looking around with a quickening interest.

"Place hasn't changed as much as I have."

He shuffled down the aisle, feeling the way with his cane.

"Get me in my seat, Watson. Then you go to the gallery. But don't you fall over the rail. I'm too old to fool with strange servants."

Robert lingered for a moment with Quaille.

"In spite of all these people," he said, "I've a strong feeling I ought to stop this thing."

"You can keep an easy conscience," Quaille answered. "McHugh's a fighter. He'd never let you."

"What's he up to?" Robert asked. "How does Wilkins feel about it? How did McHugh persuade him to go on?"

"He's pretty sick, but McHugh seems to control him absolutely."

Robert glanced up.

"Here's Joyce. I'll be glad to know what he thinks."

But Quaille didn't wait. He had hoped for Joyce's absence. That would have gone a long way in his mind to justify McHugh's stubbornness. The Englishman's morbid and disapproving expression suggested that he anticipated a further verification of his theory.

The minutes had droned away. Every seat was occupied. The crowd standing was limited only by the fire laws. Quaille, from the chair he had reserved in the rear, waited. Confused with his suspense was a profound dejection. He

determined, whatever the evening's issue for McHugh and Wilkins, to force an understanding with Barbara, to tear down once for all the somber and frowning wall that circumstances had built between them.

When the curtain glided up, Quaille struggled without success against the emotions that had obsessed him the night before. He tried to urge a lighter humor by watching Josiah in a theater after fifteen years of seclusion. But under the half light the bent figure assumed a new grimness.

The presence of the great audience had aroused the players. They responded to the stimulation of a probable applause; and as the curtain fell on the first act it came—wave upon wave of approbation. But during the second act the influence of this new stimulation waned. Morbid expectancy stalked upon the stage again. Slipped cues became frequent. The curiosity of the audience increased.

Quaille went back before the final act, but McHugh wouldn't speak to him. He paced with Wilkins up and down the wings. His cigar hung loosely from between his lips. He appeared to have lost his confidence. His eyes were apprehensive and haggard. Wilkins was even more moved. He turned a white face to Quaille. He started to speak, but the manager hurried him away.

Just before the last call, Quaille saw Barbara, ready for her entrance. The maid was no longer with her. He went up and touched her arm timidly.

"You are frightened," he said, "as much as Wilkins. Why? When will this be ended—this waiting without knowing? No matter what happens,—you understand?—I shall see you afterward."

"I don't know," she whispered.

Lurching a little, she walked away from him. The curtain went up, and Quaille returned to his place in the auditorium, to face once more that tragic scene, with a feeling, caught from McHugh's manner, of utter uselessness and defeat. In a few minutes now—

THE pitiful courage that had carried Barbara through the earlier part of the piece had failed. Dolly's eyes sought wildly again for the cat. Wilkins, with that same somnambulistic air that had preceded Carlton's death, drifted through his part. Those who had fought for admittance to the performance greeted these signs eagerly. They too realized that the vital moment was at hand. Many were bent forward in their chairs, as Joyce had sat last night.

Quaille caught a glimpse of the psychist in the rear. He clung to the rail, absorbed, prepared—it was not to be doubted—for the fulfilment of his prophecy.

The almost noiseless tapping of Josiah's cane on the floor reached Quaille. Then Dolly's scream, hitherto the prelude to fatal and inexplicable mysteries, swung him back:

"Marjorie! Look out!"

Wilkins was at the mantel, snatching up the heavy candlestick, while Barbara raised her hands and shrank away from him, gasping:

"Be careful! What are you going to do to me?"

Wilkins turned. The familiar unfinished line came to Quaille in a strangled voice:

"Pay what debts I can. Kill you if the strength—"

A great cry arose from the audience—spontaneous, unrestrained, suddenly broken off. Quaille sprang upright. He heard a ripping sound.

A hand, appearing abnormally red and huge, had crashed through the canvas scenery, had caught Wilkins' shoulder, had thrust him violently toward the center of the stage. The hand was withdrawn. From the wings a voice, choked and unrecognizable, shrilled.

The audience was on its feet, in an uproar. McHugh dashed to the stage. His collar was torn, his hair disarranged. Above the clamor his voice carried, harsh and vindictive:

"Shut every door. On the job! Don't let a soul leave this house."

To be concluded next week



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The Mystery at Woodford's

By WADSWORTH CAMP

Illustration by Arthur I. Keller

MEN in plain clothes, who had evidently been scattered about the house for such an emergency, posted themselves with quiet determination before the lobby entrance and the fire exits. That sense of being trapped alarmed the spectators. They moved toward the doors, arguing with the guards, who nevertheless refused to pass any one.

Quaile hurried back. As he ran for the passage behind the boxes, he saw Josiah struggle to his feet, leaning on the back of his chair. The shawl had slipped from his shoulders, and he made unavailing and pitiful efforts to get it once more in place. The derision had left his glance.

"Watson! Watson!" he whimpered. Joyce and Robert, breathing hard, came up, and Quaile went through the passage with them. The curtain was rattling down when they reached the stage. Dolly's eyes no longer sought for the cat: they were turned to Wilkins.

"What is it?" she kept asking. "What is it?"

Wilkins had relaxed. An odd smile twisted his features. He muttered to Dolly:

"God bless McHugh. He's got away with it."

Only Barbara disclosed no relief in the new situation. She looked at the jagged rent in the scenery above the mantel which McHugh's hand had torn. It was like an open wound. Through it Quaile dimly saw figures moving, heard suppressed, incredulous argument.

He ran into the wings. The others followed, but Quaile noticed that Barbara's feet dragged.

The sight of plain-clothes policemen confused him at first. He couldn't see who it was they held. Then, as Joyce and Robert came up, the group parted, and

he fell back before a wrinkled face, scarred by fear. Involuntarily he cried out:

"Mike!"

McHugh stood close by, grinning happily, making ridiculous efforts to rearrange his torn collar.

"It's in his right-hand coat pocket," he was saying. "Good thing you didn't let him grab it out, or there'd have been more ghosts around here than Joyce and his whole darned society could have laid. Easy with it. Don't touch the stopper; don't press the bulb."

ONE of the detectives had drawn from Mike's pocket a cheap atomizer. The end of the spray was closed. The physician who had examined Wilkins the night before stepped from the fringe of the crowd and took the contrivance. The detective protested.

"That's all right," McHugh said. "You hustle it to headquarters, and take the doctor with you. We've got some ideas about that, haven't we, doc? We want 'em proved."

The doctor nodded. He left with one of the detectives, who carried the atomizer as if it held something infinitely precious. "What's it mean, McHugh?" Quaile asked. "Mike—"

Robert stepped closer.

"Yes. What's the old man done? Why is he held?"

McHugh winked.

"Just so he won't break any bones trying to run too fast."

"It was all a trick, then? But have you any evidence against this man?"

"Evidence!" McHugh jeered, turning to Mike. "I've got so much evidence against you, Mike, that I promise within two months to see you twisting in the electric chair for Carlton's death."

Barbara cried out, but her voice was drowned by Mike's raucous scream. He controlled the trembling of his lips. The incoherent sound turned into words, throaty but intelligible:

"You sha'n't, Mr. McHugh! You haven't the heart! I'll talk. I only did as I was made—and I didn't know, I didn't know! If anybody goes to the chair, it ought to be him."

He couldn't point because of the detaining hands; but Quaile and the rest turned, following the direction of his accusing glance. And at first Quaile didn't believe, fancying that Mike groped for any chance, however absurd, to shift attention from himself. For his eyes flashed fear and hatred at Robert Bunce.

"That's what I was after!" McHugh cried. "Grab that man!"

BUT Robert had taken advantage of their momentary amazement. He had slipped some distance toward the rear. At McHugh's shout, he turned and ran past Barbara. Flinging his hands above his head in a gesture of despair, he stumbled into the narrow space between the scenery and the house-wall.

"Across the stage!" McHugh roared. "Head him off!"

Quaile had already started for the back. As he reached Barbara, she touched his arm—not detainingly; rather, as if to urge him on.

"He mustn't talk," she whispered.

Quaile entered the narrow space in time to see Robert dashing out at the other end. The man held something in his right hand. Quaile shuddered and stopped, bracing himself for the shock. It came a moment later—above the shouts and the noisy pursuit: one sharp explosion, a cry, then a sudden hush.

He went slowly back to Barbara. She had straightened. She seemed to listen still.

"You heard?" he asked.

She nodded.

"A—a shot."

The color rushed back to her cheeks. "Probably the final tragedy," Quaile said.

"You mean—Robert Bunce," she breathed.

"Yes; I think, when he found the alley guarded— Perhaps, though—"

The black-robed maid came from the stage and glided up to them. Barbara's eyes were bright with the question she didn't dare ask. But the maid understood. For the first time, Quaile saw her features quicken into positive expression; they expressed a definite satisfaction.

"He is dead," she murmured. "You must come with me now."

"Gone!" Barbara whispered.

Her eyes filled with tears.

"I can't help it. It is terrible, but I am not sorry."

A sound of tapping came from the stage. "Get her away," Quaile warned the maid.

The tapping continued.

"And I will come to you later," he



"'I remember you,' the old man quavered; 'you were Woodford's right bower, weren't you? Police got you, eh?' With increasing anger he shook his cane at Mike. 'It's you that's finished this house!'"

said to Barbara. "I may come now?"
"You have to know," she answered.
She glanced up.
"What is that tapping?"
"Take her to her dressing-room," Quail directed the maid.

The woman led Barbara back of the scenery to the circular staircase.

THE tapping sounded just beyond the canvas. The set door shook from a hand on the knob. Mike looked up.

"What you waiting for?" he complained to the detectives. "You've got to lock me up. I don't want to see him."

Watson's voice came from behind the door:

"But, Mr. Josiah, the people are all in the alley."

The set door opened. A cane waved in the aperture. Josiah appeared and shuffled toward Mike. If he had heard the shot at all, its significance had escaped him.

"I remember you," the old man quavered. "We've all grown old since those days—I never realized how old until I came here to-night. You were a fine boy then—Woodford's right bower, weren't you? Needn't look away from me. Police got you, eh? It's you that's been playing tricks with my property!"

"Don't, Mr. Josiah," Mike began.

Quail stepped back, relieved to see McHugh stalk through the doorway. The manager was visibly shaken by what he had witnessed in the alley. Josiah didn't turn. With an increasing anger he shook his cane at Mike.

"It's you that's finished this house for theatrical purposes! And I liked it. Mr. McHugh would have made it popular again. Now I'll have to sell it, after all."

McHugh went to him. He didn't meet his glance.

"It's too late, Bunce," he said in an undertone.

"What do you mean?" Josiah whined.
"I mean, if you'd agreed to sell a month ago this would never have happened."

The words to Quail were stimulating. To an extent they suggested an explanation. But they meant nothing so illuminating to Josiah. With an amiable smile, he offered McHugh his hand.

"Anyway, you were honest, weren't you?"

McHugh grasped the knotted fingers. "Why do you shake hands so hard?"

Josiah said, "That hurts. I want to know why I shouldn't agree to sell now. Robert's been after me the last two months to sign a deed for this property."

McHugh's voice was husky:
"I mean, your brother won't ask you any more. He won't trouble you, or any of us, again."

Josiah withdrew his fingers.
"You're hurting my hand, Mr. McHugh!"

He leaned heavily on his cane. His hands shook.

"Better sit down," McHugh said gruffly.

He brought a chair; Josiah sank into it.

"I'll rest a minute," he whimpered, "before I go back where I belong. I always told Robert he'd get in too deep."

He glanced up, as one who seeks justification.

"And he always said I was a miserable skintint who deserved to die poor."

"Stay with him, Watson," McHugh directed. "If you need me, I'll be on the other side of the stage. You cops bring the prisoner along."

AS they crossed the stage, in reply to Quail's questions the manager muttered:

"I've found out Robert's been spending for years. He'd been eaten alive by war stocks—played 'em the wrong way from start to finish. Borrowed from his firm and doctored the books. Facing jail, and everything gone except his share in this property—worth half a million or more for building purposes."

Quail whistled.

"Yep. Couldn't realize on it without Josiah's signature. I gather he'd just about got that, when along I came with the scheme for this revival, and spilled the beans."

"I see. Of course, he had to get you out—scare you off. And the superstitious stories about this place cried out the simple way."

McHugh nodded at Mike.

"And there was his old worshiper, knowing every angle of the building, remembering every quirk of Woodford's habits. It ought to have been the cinch he expected. It would have been, with most people; but I've worked like a dog on the case, and I've had to go on tiptoe all the way. I'll tell you about that later."

He stopped in front of the door of Woodford's dressing-room. He beckoned Joyce, who stood by the alley entrance.

"I'd like to show Quail and you some ghosts," he said. "Haven't had a chance to see 'em myself yet."

He turned to Mike.

"They're going to give you a free ride to the lock-up in a minute. You're all the law has to feed on, and it has a high old appetite. But there are some things you might tell that would make me want to help you—for instance, the combination in there."

He indicated the door with its faded gilt star. Mike compressed his lips.

"All right, Mr. McHugh. I'll trust you. I'll tell you anything I can. Pull down on the first hook on the left-hand side of the closet."

"Well, that's one thing I want to know, and you can pass me the booby prize on that. As simple as daylight."

"Mr. Woodford never made any great secret of it, sir."

McHugh opened the door.

"You and Joyce go on in, Quail, and light up while I talk to Mike about some other things before the boys take him away."

Quail entered and snapped the electric button.

"I don't see yet, Joyce," he said, "exactly how you figure in the affair."

Joyce chuckled.

"Please don't embarrass me."

HE was obviously relieved when McHugh walked in and took from his coat a flashlight similar to the one he had bought for Quail. He pressed the control and stepped into the closet—an exceptionally large one, formed by a partition running the width of the room. Neither it nor the room offered any probability of a secret compartment.

"You see," McHugh apologized, "we had never used this room before last night. Naturally, I'd looked it over, but it seemed to hide nothing. I searched a lot more carefully in the fly galleries and the cellar. Even after Barbara's scare, I couldn't find the way in. Didn't look for any trick so simple. As Mike says, Woodford probably made no great secret of it. When he grew older he wanted a place where he could get away from people and rest entirely undisturbed. Of course Mike knew about it."

He grasped the hook and pulled down. A latch clicked. The entire end of the closet opened outward—to all appearances an ordinary door.

From the darkness beyond came a stealthy stirring.

McHugh went through, flashing his light on the floor and the walls. Quail followed. The plan of the hidden room disclosed itself to his first glance. Scarcely more than four feet wide, it ran the length of the dressing-room, and lay between that and the passage. The plaster had fallen from the walls, exposing bricks and laths. It lay with the long accumulation of dust thickly over the floor and on the single piece of furniture—a skeleton of a sofa, from about which the upholstery and the wood had decayed. At the foot of this wreck crouched the thing that had stirred. Two tiny gleaming circles flashed back the light. The lithe body was ready to spring.

"Look out, McHugh!" Quail cried. "It's the cat!"

McHugh moved to one side as the animal streaked by. It tore past Quail and Joyce, through the closet, and into the dressing-room, where it scratched fiercely at the outer door. Quail experienced an odd repulsion. The cat's anger, its eager-

ness for escape, were silent save for the fury of its claws.

"It would be a useful ghost of Woodford's cat if it had a voice," McHugh said dryly. "I've tried to impress on you that Robert played for about the highest stakes there are—respectability and wealth against utter damnation socially and financially. What's a cat or two where half a million's concerned?"

"The ghost?" Quail reminded him.

"Sure," McHugh grinned. "Joyce, shut the closet door."

Joyce obeyed.

"I'm much more comfortable," he said, "with that voiceless animal locked out."

McHugh snapped off the light.

"What's that for?" Quail asked.

McHugh's exclamation was annoyed. Then his voice came from close to the floor:

"If I were on the force I'd ask them to transfer me to Canarsie! I've forgotten my alphabet. Of course, it was under the sofa all the time. Bend down here. Maybe you'd better not, Joyce. Might turn you sour on your spook science."

Quail stooped. He peered beneath the decayed piece of furniture. At once he became aware of light—a pallid, mysterious radiance that carried his mind back to the night of his vigil. The limit of its activity was a narrow circle which quivered with an odd illusion of life.

"Cold white flame—phosphorus!" McHugh murmured.

His flashlight clicked; the room was bright again. Quail reached for a small round tin can that rested close to the wall beneath the sofa. But McHugh shook his head. A serious expression had driven the satisfaction from his face.

"Don't bother. That little ghost can't show you any more than it has. It was logic we would find it here. There are things of greater importance for you, Quail."

He arose, and motioned Joyce to leave. He hung back for a moment with Quail. His tone, for him, was very gentle.

"I hate to speak of it, my boy. But you're not blind. Since we've been in this room I bet you've been thinking what I have."

Quail glanced away.
"I know what you're driving at."

"Barbara," McHugh said, "evidently knew the combination. She used it last night and opened the door. You've seen how wild Mike's cat is. She must have been scratched locking it up again, and she lied to us about the footsteps to throw us off the track. Maybe she only entered out of curiosity. I don't know about Barbara."

QUAILE had no answer. The picture of her secreted at the Bunces' was still lively in his mind. Those two incidents furnished staggering proof that she, as well as Mike, had been in Robert's confidence. Yet, Quail was sure, if she had been an accomplice, something more powerful than greed or disposition had been responsible. He would admit nothing until he had seen her.

"McHugh," he urged, "no matter what you know, no matter what you think, keep your hands off until I've talked to her. She's promised to tell me. I'm going there now. I've tried to do what you wished, and you let me work in the dark. Now I ask you this. Promise."

"I know how you feel, Quail," the manager answered. "Go see her. I don't want to be hard. I'll run up myself as soon as I've taken care of Josiah. Old bird's harder hit than I thought he'd be."

He walked through and opened the outer door. The cat slipped out, and was lost in the shadows of the alley.

McHugh returned to Josiah. Quail followed uncertainly. Barbara, he learned, had left again with a haste suggestive of flight, a cloak thrown over her costume, accompanied by the silent maid. What was there that drew her so quickly home? Quail knew the answer must lie in that room in her apartment from which the cry and the sobs had issued.

He hurried from the theater and drove to Barbara's apartment. The silent maid answered his ring. Quail walked

past her into the living-room. Barbara waited there by the window. It impressed him that some of the fear had left her face; but her eyes were very sad, her gesture of welcome mechanical. He controlled his eagerness. He held her hand for only a moment. He lost no time in putting her on her guard, glancing uneasily toward the door to the bedroom.

"In a few minutes," he said, "McHugh is coming here. You need tell me only what is necessary for your protection. Of course, he has guessed you knew of Woodford's secret room. He realizes you didn't tell us quite the truth last night. Understanding—as far as I am concerned, I ask nothing. I trust you, as I promised."

She stretched out her hands impulsively, but as he tried to clasp them she drew her fingers away. Her voice was wistful.

"I must tell you first. Perhaps then you won't care—" She shook her head before his incredulous smile.

"I don't know what Mr. McHugh may do, but I have suffered enough. It's worth it to realize your faith, and last night you were right to make me go on. I was unjust, but I was at my wits' end. You'll understand that in a minute."

She sighed.

"You are looking at the door. You are thinking of the scream."

SHE walked over and opened the door. Beyond her shoulder the confusion of the room suggested a recent occupancy; but there was none of the paraphernalia of illness, possibly of insanity, which he had forecast.

"Whoever it was," he said, "has left?"

She nodded.

"Just now—as soon as she knew Robert Bunce was dead. She didn't dare until then. It was my sister—my elder sister."

He took her hand and led her to the divan. He sat beside her, but he didn't speak at first, for in her averted eyes he read a little of the truth. At last he said gently:

"Then she really was involved with Robert's attempt?"

Barbara indicated the telephone.

"Through that—through those calls."

"How?"

"It was her position that suggested it to him. Listen. It is hard to make her confession. She—she was working for the telephone company, fighting her own fight and winning it, when he made her help him."

"I can guess," he said softly.
She placed her hand on his arm.

"You mustn't guess too much, for it wasn't really her fault that he could make her do that. It happened six years ago, when I was abroad at school. My mother and she lived in town, so that I didn't know Robert Bunce, didn't see him—until yesterday. There was an elopement—a marriage, but an illegal one. She left him as soon as she found that out. She wouldn't have my help, or any one's. She got this position and worked year after year until they made her an exchange manager. Then suddenly, one day, he appeared and threatened her. She saw all she had done crumbling. At first she refused; then he explained it was only a joke on Mr. McHugh that he was playing—and again he threatened. She had so much to lose. So she made the calls and kept them secret. It was Mike, with his perfect knowledge of Woodford's voice, who did the talking. It was wrong, but it seemed easier than to give up everything—to face the scandal he would have raised in the company. And that far I agreed with her. She never dreamed. Then Mr. Carlton died."

Quail looked at her with a great pity.

"I see. She had placed herself beyond the law—probably accessory to a murder."

"And she swore," Barbara cried out, "that she would kill herself if I told. The horror of it grew—grew. She came in that night after Dolly had left. She heard what you said to me—all that you said. It seemed to her that she had finished my happiness too. It swept her off her feet. For a moment she was hysterical, and you see now I had to keep you quiet. But I thought I couldn't stand any more. I

went to see Robert the next morning. He let me in, and made me wait for him; and you found me. Later, when he came back, I could do nothing. He only threatened. He was frightened and reckless himself. He had gone too far. He didn't dare stop. So you can understand how desperate I was last night. If I had told what I knew, I believe my sister would have killed herself—her nerves had reached that pitch. If I didn't tell, I was almost sure there would be another murder. I thought it all out. There was only one way. I made up my mind to let my own future go, to refuse flatly to play, to make the rehearsal and the performance impossible."

"That was brave. No wonder you hated me. Yet there is no hatred in your eyes now."

Her flush increased.

THE ringing of the door-bell angered Quaille. He knew what hand had pushed the button. Yet that had to be faced sooner or later. There was nothing of the spy, however, about McHugh to-night. His voice came to them, high-pitched, apologetic:

"Two is company, but here am I."

Quaille met him at the door. He grasped his arm.

"You were wrong, McHugh. She is only useful to you as a witness; and, since you don't need her, surely you won't—"

He broke off. McHugh had pushed past him. He went straight to Barbara.

"Was I right when I said two, Barbara?" he asked.

She pointed to the open bedroom door. McHugh went over and looked in. As he swung around, Quaille caught the relief in his face.

"That was the best thing she could have done," the manager said. "It gives us a chance to let sleeping dogs lie. There's about ten times more than enough proof without the telephone calls, if what Quaille says is true. And, before you think of me too harshly, remember, all I knew was that she was responsible for that trickery, and that she lived here with you, and that you kept her hidden. You'll have to own up, Barbara, you've been behaving as queer as Dick's hat-band. Let me judge for myself. Tell me what you've given Quaille."

She sighed, but she did as he wished. She answered all his questions. At the end McHugh took her hand.

"I guess, after all, you did the best you could, Barbara, and it wasn't very easy. You'll have to try to forgive me."

Quaille saw her lips quiver. He knew she was on the verge of a breakdown. To spare her that, to turn her mind from her own share in the case, he arose and shook McHugh's shoulders, speaking rapidly:

"Maybe you'll open that close mouth of yours now. I'd like to know how you got beyond the spook idea to Mike and Robert."

McHugh took a cigar from his pocket and waved it with an assumption of carelessness.

"Sit down, Quaille. Any good detective—just common sense in fitting the facts together." But it was clear he was very proud of his success.

"You're modest," Quaille said. "There's a lot I don't pretend to understand of my own experiences—for instance, why my flashlight played such tricks the night I was alone in the theater."

McHugh's smile was reminiscent.

"Your flashlight! I guess I ought to gild that and wear it as a watch-charm, for it's what finally put me on the right track. At first I was like you, Quaille—afraid of the musty, decayed feeling of the place, wondering if there wasn't a lot in the spirit stuff, after all. I acknowledge that first afternoon was a shock; for there were only you and Mike and Tommy and me, and, trusting you all as I did, what happened was a poser. Then when Carlton died I was scared, children—about ready to call it spirits and get out. Place was on my nerves, like it gets on everybody else's. Then I noticed that Barbara was acting queer, as if she might know something. I guess it was about that time your sister unburdened."

"Yes," Barbara said.

"And along came Dolly," McHugh continued, "with her talk about the perfume. I began to wonder if a drug hadn't been used on Carlton; but I didn't see how it could have been administered, and I couldn't get the motive, unless it was to chase me out of the theater. That was only an idea, but it's why I didn't spy there myself, Quaille. If my idea was right I knew they'd get me sure."

McHugh glanced at his cigar with a yearning doubt.

"Say, my doctor's business isn't what it ought to be. If you don't throw me out, Barbara, I'll light this torch and pay the bill."

He struck a match. He stretched himself deeper in his chair. For some time he smoked contentedly.

"When you told me your flashlight worked before and after you were alone in the theater," he said, "but not when you heard the footsteps, it seemed pretty likely human fingers had tampered with it. I remembered seeing you go into the box where you'd left your overcoat, and drop it in the pocket. That was right after you had searched the house. It would have been simple for a hand to reach in, take the cylinder, break the connection or remove the battery, then put the light back in your pocket. If that was so, whoever was responsible had done the limping and, after searing you from the theater, had put the cylinder in working order again. For the first time, I had something that looked real. But I didn't hit on Mike then. He had worked for me, off and on, for many years. I had come to think of him as about the most dependable man I ever had. I trusted him to the limit. It wasn't until the next morning, when I looked at that spook picture of Woodford in the middle of our group, that I got it—and then I could scarcely believe. You see, Mike had brought me those pictures from the photographer's. He had had time to have that one doctored, and I began to see his share in the game. Everything fitted. That's why I was so staggered that morning. Also why I was so cheerful. I didn't dare let you in, on account of Barbara. Besides, I was just getting the first few pieces of the puzzle together. I hadn't got to the real picture."

"Please let's have the pieces," Quaille urged.

WHEN McHugh answered there was a color of shame in his voice.

"I might's well own up I'd made a bad mistake the day before. I'd told Mike I was going to hide you in the theater. As I say, I trusted him then, and I simply explained wanting the key. But that made it point to him all the surer, for he knew you would be there, and he was the only one who could let himself in the theater after you'd locked the door. It came to me then that, if there was a hiding-place, he would know it as well as he did every one of Woodford's peculiarities. I didn't need any more answer to the first afternoon. He had limped like Woodford, and had screamed after he had scared Tommy to the alley by putting the lights out. You see, he could always limp like Woodford, or do anything like Woodford."

"But the lights?" Quaille asked.

"A cinch. He had taken the electricians down there and worked with them. It's only when you're on the wrong track, or no track at all, that things look hard. It was easy for him to cut a wire into that switchboard that would short-circuit it, then locate the button anywhere he pleased. He short-circuited the border that day, just as he played with Barbara's light last night, just as he did with the house lights after Wilkins had fallen. A child who knows anything about wiring can fix those simple stunts. What made it so convincing was, he pretended to be scared to death himself, and there was every reason to us why he should be. Besides, since he was always with us, he could wait for the most startling moment to spring his stuff."

"Say, Quaille, you'll have to confess he handed you a flutter the night you were alone. What I got from him to-night is just what I'd figured out. He sneaked in



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after you, lowered the curtain, got the cat and carried it to the dress-circle, then limped down, and traced the figure in phosphorus on the passage door. By standing to one side and opening and shutting that, he made the figure appear to grow and fade.

"At first I couldn't understand about his locking and unlocking the stage entrance after you had run out. That seemed a little too much trouble, just to puzzle us; but the phosphorus answers that too. The stuff is nearly alive, and it lasts for a long time. He had to destroy that evidence and fix your flashlight, and he didn't dare risk being disturbed. So he locked the stage entrance, and unlocked it again when he had the passage door clean. Then all he had to do was to hide himself with the cat in the secret room while we searched our heads off. When he heard us going he was in too much of a hurry. The cat slipped past him in the dark and got away. You recollect, Dolly didn't feel it for several days. Of course he got that one back, or another."

"But the motive?" Quaille said. "That must have troubled you, even then. There was nothing in all this to point to Robert."

"Yes, there was," McHugh answered; "and something in the telephone calls, too—although I must say I thought it more likely at first that the trail would lead to Josiah. As far as Mike's concerned, you know he never worked steadily for me. Now a production and then a production. That meant he had some money from another source, and I guessed there would be gossip about it among stage-hands and property-men of his own generation. There was. Mike had been Robert Bunce's man Friday in the old

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days, and Robert had looked after him more or less—what amounted to a small pension. Then the telephone calls got me on my ear because I couldn't trace them. I found out how that queer ringing was made. You've got one of those light-toned announcers, Quaille, and so has Barbara."

She nodded.
"Anyway," McHugh went on, "by barely making the connection in the exchange and breaking it continually, you get that queer sound. So after a few experiments in that direction I had to pass the spirits up there, too. It was easy that Mike had done the talking. I wanted to know who had made the connections and done the ringing. Looked as if it must be somebody in authority who could do it on the sly. So I had the manager of the exchange through which those calls were made followed. She came here."

He glanced at Barbara and his tone softened.
"And one day she went to Robert Bunce's office, and she left, crying. Then I got the whole game, and I was madder than a hornet, because it had been staring me in the face all the time—as it had you, Quaille. That's the trouble with everybody—always let the plain things slip."

"Of course I see what you mean," Quaille said.

"Sure. There was Josiah owning Woodford's jointly with Robert, and clinging to his real estate tooth and claw—famous the town over for it; and here was Robert, a spender and doing business in Wall Street. Queer things have happened there since the beginning of the war."

He grinned sheepishly.
"Some have happened to yours truly, but I know when I've had enough. I found out from my brokers that Robert didn't. He was in pretty deep, but nobody knew how deep until I got his firm to go over the books on the quiet. He needed nearly half a million, and he needed it in a hurry. It sat waiting for him at Woodford's, which was a dead loss as a theater; and, mind you, half of the value of that property was honestly his, but he couldn't realize on it without Josiah's signature to the deed. You know, Josiah would sooner have his hair cut and take a box at the opera than sell his land. The old bird's owned up to me that Robert had found a purchaser, and he'd given in finally and agreed to sign, when along I came and handed Woodford's another lease of life as a theater. You bet he changed his mind, because that was one of his hobbies, and refused Robert point-blank. Said he wouldn't sign anything until he found out if I could bring Woodford's back. But, for Robert, waiting was ruin. If he chased me out, on the other hand, and gave the place a final black eye, Josiah would sell, and, by gad, he had to get me out in a hurry."
"After Carlton died Robert had both Mike and Barbara's sister in the hollow of his hand. They didn't dare break away then, because he had involved them in a murder. Say! Can't you get Mike's state of mind? He didn't have to fake being afraid then. His pale face and shaky knees came natural as eating to him. So, as soon as I'd got that far and faced a real explanation, I sent for Joyee."

McHugh stopped and laughed.
"Best little come-on a detective ever had," he continued. "I didn't have much legal evidence. I didn't know how Carlton had been killed. I had to lead them on until I could catch Mike with the goods. I used Joyee to give the impression I knew nothing and was still investigating the spook theory. It gave Robert the courage to go ahead. On my own showing last night, one more shot and he'd have me out."

"But didn't you have enough then?" Quaille asked. "Why did you risk Wilkins twice?"
McHugh grunted.
"You're a better playwright than a lawyer, Quaille. I went on my knees this morning to keep Robert's firm from arresting him. I tell you, I had to prove who killed Carlton and what the weapon was.

I couldn't even guess about the stuff until after the riot last night. Since Mike had done all the work, I had to put him in a position where he'd squeal on Robert. Of course I thought I could bring it off last night, but I didn't know quite enough, and I didn't guess how carefully Robert had planned the whole campaign."

"I'd figured, of course, that the attack had come from behind the scenes on the side where Carlton fell. That heavy mantel makes an angle in the scenery. I saw Mike slip in there just before the big scene, and I was sure I had him. The main trouble was, I didn't dare show myself to him. I had to jump him at the very moment he was making the attack. I stepped around when Wilkins hit his line, and I got just one glimpse of Mr. Mike. He had his back to me, so fortunately he didn't see me. He had the right-hand flap of his coat hunched up above his shoulder and pressed against the scenery. His left hand was fumbling inside the mantel. I was just about to jump him when—bang! The riot broke. The lights went out. Of course the beggar had strung his wire along the roof of the cellar. I had the whole thing now, and I knew I could bring it off to-night if Wilkins wasn't done for. That staggered me, and I pretty much forgot everything else until I'd run on the stage and found him still living."

"I suspected a drug at the first," Quaille said, "but I couldn't see, and I don't understand now, how it was used. You say Mike held the right-hand flap of his coat against the scenery?"

"Yes, so I knew it was in that pocket. You recollect how Wilkins came up here, night before last, and told us about that time simply dropped out of his life?"

"Naturally. The same drug was responsible?"

"Yes. That started me after the drug hot-foot. I questioned Wilkins about the cab-driver that brought him up here, and he couldn't describe him, because it was a cold night and the man had had his face muffled and his hat low over his eyes. But he remembered that the fellow had got down from his seat, opened the door, and helped him in. He couldn't recall anything after that until he was turning out of the street your apartment's on, feeling queer. It was easy enough for Mike to have a cab handy there. There's no stand near, and Wilkins would be sure to pick it up. Of course Mike drove him around until the effect of the stuff had worn off. And it nearly worked. If I hadn't been able to go to Wilkins and tell him what we were up against, there would have been no revival of 'Coward's Fare.' He'd had about enough."

"YOU remember, Quaille, I took the doctor home from your place last night. He was all worked up over the case. He was stumped by Wilkins' reactions, as he insisted on calling them. When I told him about the affair in the cab and Carlton's death, and all I knew and suspected, he got an idea. You see, it's his business to have ideas about drugs. He took me into his library and went through a lot of murderous books. Say, I never knew there was so much learning in the world. Finally he put his fingers together and said it might be hydrocyanic acid. He doped out a theory that the analysis has verified."

"That's dangerous and powerful stuff, isn't it?" Quaille asked.

"So powerful," McHugh answered, "that as much as you could put on a pin-head would knock a man over like a fifteen-inch shell."

Quaille sprang up excitedly.
"I begin to see. It wasn't swallowed."

"Of course it wasn't swallowed," McHugh said. "The book says the stuff is a highly volatile liquid which gives rise to vertigo if inhaled in minute quantities. It's one of the most rapid and deadly poisons known, if not the worst."

"Hasn't it an odor?" Quaille asked.
McHugh laughed.

"Sure. The doc and I hit on that, but, as the book told us, it is very volatile. I expect you're going to ask me what that means. What I get is that it means the

smell evaporates very rapidly in any open space—"

He looked up.
"Like a stage, for instance. Besides, it seems it can be modified by alcohol. But this is the real point. The doc hit the ceiling when I told him about the perfume you and Dolly had been sniffing about the stage. He dug in the books again, and told me about a thing called oil of benzaldehyde. It's full of hydrocyanic acid. When the acid is removed the oil is sold as the basis of a perfume, and it used to be a popular one. He found a lot of instances of poisoning from this perfume, and proved that they were all due to traces of acid remaining in the oil. That settled the whole business. All they had to do was to put a tiny quantity of that deadly acid in the perfume—what they figured would put a man out, sprayed as Mike did it, directly in Carlton's and Wilkins' nostrils when they stood by the mantel, lifting the candlestick. Talk about a sledge-hammer! That was it—applied to the base of the brain. The only good thing to be said for the acid is that its effects pass off very quickly, provided it doesn't instantly kill. I'd never have forgiven myself if Wilkins had got an overdose last night. As I say, I don't believe they intended to kill Carlton. He was probably in worse shape physically than we thought, or else they gave him a little too much, or else he breathed it deeper."

"So I knew exactly what to expect to-night. I was sure that Mike had the atomizer in his pocket, and without taking it out had lifted the nozzle to a hole in the scenery; but I couldn't find that hole until I had you hold the candle flame directly in front of the mantel. Then I found it. He had pasted brown paper across, so that you had to get a light close up to it to tell the difference from the canvas. After the third act had commenced, when I knew it would be too late for him to investigate, I went down to the cellar and dished his wire for him. He wasn't going to cover himself with darkness to-night. Of course, I had to wait again until the last minute; but I knew the light would last, and I didn't see how he could destroy the evidence. So, as soon as Wilkins started that fatal line, I grabbed Mike. But of course he had his coat up to the scenery, and I knew the spray was in the hole. I couldn't take chances of his pressing the bulb, so I shoved Wilkins away. Didn't want him to go through that experience again."

QUAILE'S laugh was a trifle resentful.
"You're clever. I guessed you had told Wilkins all you knew."

McHugh arose. He glanced at Barbara.
"If I didn't trust you more, young man, it was because of this young lady. I guessed if you were any good at all you'd come to her with all you knew."

"So I would have," Quaille confessed.
"So I did."

McHugh grunted. He took Barbara's hand. His voice trailed into a sigh.

"I'll dance at your wedding, my dear; and I suppose that means you are leaving the stage."

"You'll do more than that," Quaille said. "As an extra humiliation you'll be best man. It will remind you that, although you're a great detective, you do make mistakes."

McHugh grinned.
"Anyway, that won't prevent my kissing the bride."

He grasped her shoulders and touched his lips to her forehead. There was something pathetically paternal about the caress. Quaille suspected moisture in the narrow eyes.

He waved to them and slipped out. The door clicked behind him. They faced each other alone in this room, as they had done the other night. Only now Barbara's cheeks showed no pallor, and, if she shrank away, it was with a different fear. When he followed, her resistance possessed an unconscious witchery.

There was no longer any point in struggling. The room was very quiet. The maid stole in with his hat and coat. There was some difficulty about her expression.

The End